

Pearls among the urinaries

Richard Beadle

RALPHANNA III (Editor)
The Index of Middle English Prose: Handlist I.
A handlist of manuscripts containing Middle
English prose in the Henry E. Huntington
Library
81pp. 085991 1640

G. A. LESTER (Editor)
The Index of Middle English Prose: Handlist II.
Manuscripts containing Middle English prose
in the John Rylands and Chetham's Libraries,
Manchester
112pp. 085991 1896

PATRICK J. HORNBER (Editor)
The Index of Middle English Prose: Handlist
III. Manuscripts containing Middle English
prose in the Digby Collection, Bodleian
Library, Oxford
86pp. 085991 2302

Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer. £19.50
each.

Middle English prose remains something of an
undiscovered country, and, current priorities
in English studies generally being what they
are, those with sufficient editorial skills to re-
deem a text of that period from oblivion sel-
dom find it the way to academic preferment or
appearance in print. Much significant writing
of the time, and often prose of the highest
interest or quality, continues to be the object of
widespread ignorance and neglect. Nicholas
Love's fine and most influential *Mirror of the
Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* languishes almost

unread in L. F. Powell's 1908 edition, which
is practically unobtainable and not all that reli-
able. An authentic text of Walter Hilton's spiri-
tual classic, *The Scale of Perfection*, is not yet
available in print, though Japanese scholars
have provided valuable editions of some of his
minor works. The anonymous translation of the
Golden Legend made in 1437, long before
Caxton printed his own version, is unfamiliar
even to professional medievalists.

These are all desiderata of a high order, and
work of course goes on in connection with all of
them and many others of scarcely less import-
ance. But there is hardly a case in which such
work is not seriously hampered by a lack of
knowledge about the exact nature and extent
of the primary sources, the manuscripts and
their contents. Almost every library in which
early English vernacular manuscripts are to be
found in any number holds volumes containing
Middle English prose seldom opened since the
sixteenth century, let alone catalogued, stud-
ied and edited. Until they are, knowledge of
the repertoire of early English prose, and of
the ways in which prose developed as both a
literary and a practical medium, will remain
relatively sketchy and partial. There are still
undoubtedly significant discoveries and
contributions to be made, for this is the field
which has already yielded, within living mem-
ory, major revelations such as the Winchester
Malory, *The Book of Margery Kempe* and *The
Equivoque of the Planets*.

Calls for an *Index of Middle English Prose*
began to come soon after the completion of the
indispensable *Index of Middle English Verse*
(1943). Such a project was at length initiated at

a conference in Cambridge in 1977: the Henry
E. Huntington Library, John Rylands and
Chetham's Libraries, Manchester and Bodleian
Digby Handlists are its first-fruits. Identifying,
classifying and indexing Middle English prose
is a much larger and more difficult undertaking
than gathering the verse incipits of the period,
and the preliminary task of locating and hand-
listing the extant material by collection is cur-
rently the work of an international team
orchestrated by A. S. G. Edwards. The second
phase will be to compile the prose *Index* from
the incipits (and reverse explicit) scattered
throughout the various handlists, which are
likely to go on appearing for years to come.

Some of the work of handlisting is straight-
forward - where, for example, a manuscript
contains a single text. The problems posed by
the numerous miscellanea, however, compila-
tions of things like culinary and medical re-
ceipts, or short devotional tracts (often excerpted
from longer works), are very formidable
indeed. For example, medical receipts for one
and the same ailment are sometimes so numer-
ous and so minutely varied as to defy classifica-
tion. Early technical writing of all kinds is not
frequently to be found in print, and will un-
doubtedly prove a severe trial to the indexers,
who already have much to put up with in other
ways. As one contributor to the 1977 confer-
ence observed of his encounter with the
medicina, "There were enough unpleasant con-
coctions 'For the man that may not piss' for me
not to want to go on to those 'For the horse that
may not piss'." The going can indeed be heavy
in these areas, and the indexer will turn with
relief from this sort of thing to, for instance, the

charms and spells that often appear in the same
manuscripts: "To make angels appear", or "To
save your clothes from stealing all night".

Handlists I, II and III promise well for the
project as a whole. Ralph Hanna III, G. A.
Lester and Patrick J. Hornber have set exam-
plary standards in identifying the prose items in
their respective collections, and their lists of
manuscripts elsewhere containing the same
texts will be invaluable to compilers working in
other libraries. This however raises the only
obvious omission (which the General Editors
should consider retrospectively for these
volumes, as well as for future handlists), name-
ly a consolidated list indexing all the manu-
scripts - wherever their location - mentioned
anywhere in each handlist. With each new list
of this kind, cross-referencing and identifica-
tion of texts will be greatly expedited for those
still at work in the field, for as the weary re-
searcher opens yet another charmless urinary, he
or she will be grateful to know at a glance,
rather than after a trawl, whether reference has
already been made to the manuscript.

Studies in Bibliography, Volume Forty (236pp.,
University Press of Virginia, \$25), opens with
articles by G. Thomas Tenselle on sample
bibliographical descriptions of Melville's *Red-
burn* and by John Jowett and Gary Taylor on
the three texts of 2 Henry IV. Other contri-
butions include Conor Fahy on the 1532
edition of *Orlando Furioso*, and Jan Fergus
and Ruth Portner on the records of the
eighteenth-century bookseller John Clay. In
all, some nineteen articles range as usual from
the fifteenth century to the mid-twentieth.

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'L'Œuf et le coquillage', reproduced from *Man Ray: Photographs* (256pp, with 347 duochrome plates) £19.95, 0 500 27473 8, which will be published on August 10 by Thames and Hudson.

The intelligentsia goes pop

R. W. JOHNSON

KEITH A. READER
Intellectuals and the Left in France since 1968
154pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333 361970

MELINDA CAMBER PORTER
Through Parisian Eyes: Reflections on contemporary French arts and culture
244pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
019 5041046

LUC FERRY and ALAIN RENAUT
68-86: Histoires de l'individu
134pp. Paris: Gallimard. fr. 62.
207 0709485

ALAIN FINKIELKRAUT
La Défaite de la pensée
165pp. Paris: Gallimard. fr. 72.
207 0709450

BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY
Éloge des intellectuels
154pp. Paris: Grasset. fr. 55.
2346 392918

HERVÉ HAMON and PATRICK ROTMAN
Génération
Tome 1: Les Années de rêve
616pp. Paris: Seuil. fr. 110.
202 0095491

It is a well-established law of social history and publishing alike, that a large surge of publication about a "topical" social phenomenon is a clear sign that that phenomenon has fallen into irreversible decline. This is not quite the paradox it seems: often it is only as a phenomenon declines that it is possible to get a sufficiently external view of it to sum it up. There is no doubt that this maxim applies to the outpouring of books about the French intelligentsia - of which the titles above form only a part.

The present crisis of the French intelligentsia has three major facets. The decline of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the waning of Marxism have deprived intellectuals of the ideological lodestone which has guided them since the war. The commitment to Marxism or Communism satisfied many needs: a taste for the absolute, a powerful world-view, a chic radicalism, the possibility of alliance with a formidable political and trade union movement and an altruistic concern for the wretched of the earth. No replacement for Marxism is in sight and, looking at that list of attributes, it is difficult to imagine that any alternative can offer half as much.

The recession of this ideological tide has, moreover, coincided with the demise of many leading figures. Sartre, Aron and Foucault have died; Roland Barthes, on leaving a lunch with Mitterrand and the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, was knocked over and killed by a laundry-van; Paulantzas committed suicide by jumping out of a fifth-floor window; and Althusser seems unlikely to re-emerge into public view after confessing to having strangled his wife. (Althusser's fate says something of the peculiar status of French intellectuals. Roger Garaudy, in *Le Moule*, wrote a highly sympathetic account of the tragedy, suggesting that Althusser had been so haunted by the idea of death that he had merely wanted "to free those closest to him from the torment of life" and that it was really a case of "altruistic suicide". The rest of the press observed a respectful silence despite the fact that Althusser has never been brought to trial.) Garaudy himself is still with us. Having progressed from Politburo membership of the PCF to dissident Marxism, he became first a Green and now a Muslim, extolling the "enormous debt" we all owe to Ayatollah Khomeini.

But the greatest threat to the traditional intelligentsia derives not from political sources but its own social behaviour. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has written at great length of how intellectuals sought to consolidate their "aristocratic" position in French society by the development of an ideology of "distinction", the chief signs of which were an exaggerated taste for arcane and inaccessible language and theories. This is undoubtedly true, as anyone knows who has attempted to plough through theses developed in this specialized argot (in which words whose meaning one thought one had grasped now appear, bafflingly, in inverted commas, suggesting a new and always elusive refinement of meaning - one never does quite catch up). Even so intelligent and

readable an interpreter of the French scene as Keith Reader falls into this trap occasionally, as when he observes, in *Intellectuals and the Left in France since 1968*, that "Tel Quel's politics of the signifier provided a sophisticated theoretical justification . . . for the radical liberating possibilities of the texts it exalted", and goes on to suggest that the magazine's theorizing may also be seen as "a phallosocial enterprise of totalization". Faced with prose like that, one could indeed do with a signifier or two. One hastens to add, though, that Reader's book is the best of those reviewed here - a sure guide through the subtleties of the French intellectual scene of the past two decades. Unhappily, he has been poorly served by his publishers, who have slapped a grotesque price on his admirably succinct book.

But there is another way of understanding Bourdieu, that he is in effect rationalizing the way in which French intellectuals have latterly deserted the world of learned journals and arcane debates in order to go pop. There is no doubt that this process - scathingly chronicled by Régis Debray - has occurred on a large scale. The modern would-be intellectual aims at publishing in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Le Point* or *Le Monde*, not in *Annales* or *Tel Quel*, and the summit of his hopes is to appear on television. Just what a descent from grace that could involve was best illustrated by the phenomenon of the *nouveau philosophe*, packaged and marketed rather like pop stars but singularly devoid of real intellectual substance. Debray's verdict, cited in Melinda Camber Porter's *Through Parisian Eyes*, is perfectly just:

People like Bernard-Henri Lévy are stars. First, because they have an ego which needs satisfying . . . and the job of the intellectual is to exercise an influence on the way other people think. So the actual vector of influence is in the media, nowadays. All the intellectuals are in the media. A few centuries ago you would have found these same people as preachers at Notre Dame, because that was where the action was. Tomorrow, if being in the circus is where the action is, they'll learn how to do a flying

trapeze act. These are not people who produce a body of serious work. They are people who want power. Stenilhat did not exert any influence on his contemporaries. He wrote books.

Several of the books under review underline this verdict. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut's *68-86* is an undisguised piece of book-making, based on the false analogy between the Events of May 1968 and the student demonstrations of December 1986 which forced Chirac to climb down on university reform. The latter event was, after all, the very model of conservative, respectable pressure-group politics, aimed at preserving the status quo which guarantees university entrance to any student with the *bac* and which does not allow of a national pecking order among universities. The Ferry-Renaut volume is simply one example of what promises to be a major wave of books trying to make a quick killing out of the twentieth anniversary of the May Events. Their book is full of empty philosophizing, the tone of which may be gathered from the happy familiarity with which they refer to such intellectual giants as Abby Hoffman and Jerry Rubin as "Abby and Jerry".

Alain Finkielkraut's *La Défaite de la pensée* is not much better. It argues, plausibly enough, that the crisis of the French intelligentsia derives in part from the internationalization of culture and the fact that all societies are becoming multi-cultural, losing much of their old national specificity. Finkielkraut then attempts to touch base with the entire pantheon of cultural influences, ranging from Stalin to Shakespeare, before somehow reducing it all to the Band Aid slogan (taken as the motto of the new universal culture) of "We are the world, we are the children". His hunt. Or rather, *hoj*.

Bernard-Henri Lévy's *Éloge des intellectuels* is so profoundly silly and pompous as to be almost a self-parody. The main sign of the intellectual crisis for Lévy is the superior attention being showered by TV on pop stars, comedians and charismatic entrepreneurs. Not, he

hastens to add, that there's anything wrong with TV - "I find myself very much at home there". He then goes on to predict the emergence of a new kind of intellectual which, typically, he refers to as "the intellectual of the Third Kind". This turns out to be a self-portrait, with the most important characteristic apparently being hostility to the Left. This is a book by a man with almost nothing to say but who can't bear not to be in print.

Melinda Camber Porter's book is more of a curate's egg - a collection of thirty-three interviews, some of which are genuinely interesting. At least, there were clearly supposed to be thirty-three interviews but some of the most important subjects - Sartre, de Beauvoir, Malraux, Raymond Aron - are simply missing. Others such as Peter Brook and Brecht Breitenbach don't really belong here, while others still - Yves Montand or Roger Vadim (who appears in a chapter entitled "Decisive Women") - don't have much to say. The result is a disappointingly slight book. Quite clearly, the key figure for Ms Porter was that leading specimen of the *grand journaliste*, Olivier Todd: besides one chapter devoted to him many of the chapters on other figures largely consist of Todd's comments on them. Todd is refreshingly down to earth. One reason for the national prestige of French intellectuals, he points out, is that they gave France a world reputation for intelligence and sophistication, while the brutal truth is that the French read fewer books than most and can muster only one quality newspaper. (One cannot, for all the fashionable hype, count *Libération* - which carries far less news than, say, the *Guardian*, sells only 100,000 copies and carries soft porn.) Todd describes French intellectuals as "drunk on words. Sentences have a practical beauty. But the verification principle just doesn't apply."

There is an important point here. French high culture, even more than its British counterpart, has been essentially literary and philosophical. It has also had a boldness, élan and brilliance which one can only admire. But this literary bias - even the predominant Marxist current was always singularly lacking in any knowledge of economics - has meant that the intelligentsia has, in its political judgments, always been extremely open to the winds of fashion. In the 1960s this led to a largely uncritical acceptance of Third Worldism - Mao's claims for the Cultural Revolution found more believers in Paris than in any other European capital. Similarly, in the past few years many French intellectuals went overboard on Reaganism to a degree unequalled anywhere else in Europe. If one pointed out that the Reagan economic boom was based on unsustainable budget and trade deficits which spelt terrible trouble around the corner, one was met by blank incomprehension: it was all a matter of style and ideas, wasn't it?

Or again, the critique of communism mounted by French intellectuals in the last decade has centred, above all, on the gulag, a discovery always treated as new, shocking and explosive. But the historical facts about Soviet labour-camps had been widely available for years - it was only the previously blinkered attitude of the French intelligentsia that made the phenomenon seem new. In general, the lack of any real roots in the more hard-nosed social sciences has meant that this has been an intelligentsia largely free to believe what it wanted to believe.

This is one reason why May 1968 still occupies such a central place in all these accounts of Parisian intellectual life. Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, who made their name with a muck-raking exposé of Parisian intellectual life: *Les Intellectuels*, have launched out on a two-volume account of the generation which made the Events. The first volume, *Les Années de rêve*, traces their story from the mid-1950s through to 1968; a second volume, *Les Années de poudre*, will follow the former *événements* through to today. The authors have done their research well and the results are fascinating, especially since they intersperse their account of events with snippets in which the main actors look back with hindsight on what they said, did or felt at the time. The strength of the book lies in the careful reconstruction of the political and intellectual environment of the late 1950s and early 1960s - the world of the Union des Étudiants Communistes, Mendès-France, the

One of the photographs from the section "Landscapes" in Eamon McCabe's *Photographer with teeth* by Simon Barnes (82 black-and-white plates. The Kingswood Press, 10 Upper Grosvenor Street, London W1. £15. 0 434 981109).

PSU, UNEF, the Servin-Casanova affair (Marcel Servin and Laurent Casanova, the young Turk reformers of the PCF, were expelled from the party in 1961); the impact on the likes of Dehry, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Alain Geismar, Serge Joly, Pierre Goldman, Alain Krivine and Bernard Kouchner of Hungary, the Algerian War, the building of the Berlin Wall, and of such cultural bombshells as rock-and-roll, *Jules et Jim*, *A Bout de souffle* and *Les quatre cents coups*.

Hamon and Rotman are, I think, doubly right to insist on the importance of cinematic influence. In 1950 Paris had 140,000 students; in 1961 215,000; in 1963 308,000 and by 1968 600,000. While the ever-growing class could drift around the Boul' Mich and sit in the Deux Magots, Le Rhythmic, the Old Navy and Le Buci, marvelling that the *cafés de papa* were all still playing their central role, the more luminescent truth was that the Sorbonne was still also *l'université de papa*: almost nothing had changed in accommodate the burgeoning student body. The reality was inaccessible professors, an ever-more desperate search for lodgings and, often, profound loneliness. Then, as now, the only real refuge lay in the huge number of cinemas which did the Left Bank: there students can escape into a world of fantasy and surrealism which is often as real to them as anything else in their lives. It is impossible to understand the slogans of May '68 — "Je suis marxiste — le dimanche Groucho", "L'imagination ou le pouvoir", "Sous le pavé — la plage", and so on — unless one takes this surreal, cinematic influence into account.

The cinema also probably played its part in the growing belief in voluntarist action. The students of the 1960s had seen the Algerian

FLN take on half-a-million French soldiers — impossible odds — and win. Che Guevara, first in Cuba and then in Latin America at large, also seemed to preach the message that who dares, wins. Mao's Cultural Revolution suggested much the same message — even the most massive social and economic obstacles could be overcome by determined acts of will. Most of all, of course, the continuing struggle of the Vietnamese suggested that sheer determination might overcome even the might of American imperialism. And given De Gaulle's crusade against that same imperialism, it seemed easy enough to conclude that "Vietnam fights for us!" Without doubt the Tet offensive of February 1968 had a major, perhaps even a decisive impact, on the events that were to erupt in Paris three months later. The Vietnamese had taken everything the Americans could throw at them, had been napalmed, targeted with smart bombs, hunted down by fleets of gunships, carpet-bombed with B-52s — and yet here they were, by a gigantic and heroic assertion of will, carrying the war right into Saigon, fighting from the very basement of the US Embassy, running up the NLF flag in Huế. What could the will not achieve? It was indeed like the films where the western heroes triumphed against impossible odds.

It is conventional to celebrate May '68 as the source of the new ideological directions of the 1970s — feminism, participation, ecology and so on; a new beginning. But May was also an end, a defeat. The retrospective comments of participants leave no doubt about that.

My years as a militant did nothing for me. I deplore the fact that all that knowledge, all that savoir-faire, was not recognised by society. In that career I met

people who were more intelligent than my present superiors in the hierarchy. None of them holds real responsibility today. Of that whole adventure, nothing remains. Nothing. [A junior official in the Education Ministry.]

To find yourself a star from one day to the next, that goes to your head. You couldn't go into a bistro without people expecting you to utter historic words. The patron of your usual restaurant in the Rue Cujas would offer you a gun in case it might be useful. People quite unknown to you would kiss your hands and call you a son of the people. It was strange, worrying, but of course enjoyable. And it was hard, aggressive and frightening. I didn't know who I was any longer. [Alain Geismar, today a Vice-president of the Informatics Development Agency.]

I lived from day to day. Like everybody else I was surprised at the scale of the events. I had no idea as to the outcome. I didn't know what the limit was, or if there was a limit. I felt isolated and cut off. Politically I was rootless, incapable of debating with the Left militants with their certainties. I started off because I'd been left behind. It was a flight. [Daniel Cohn-Bendit.]

For May also showed the limits of voluntarism. The Fifth Republic régime might well be authoritarian and unresponsive, but it had given France a decade of stability and unexamined prosperity. In the crunch, that was not to be lightly cast aside. A voluntarist student revolt, even when accompanied by the greatest strike wave the country had ever seen, produced, in the end, a crushing right-wing parliamentary majority. It may be possible, once in a while, under the exactly right conditions, and with a simple trumpet blast, to bring the walls of Jericho tumbling down, but brick walls don't usually behave like that. And it is naive and porochial not to have understood that before. For the truth was that the Paris intel-

ligentsia had, as ever, been indulgently selective in the images of voluntarist triumph it sought to emphasize. The students had, notably, paid almost no attention to those other and even more moving events of spring 1968 in Prague. Eastern European Communism in crisis? So what else was new? Dubček promising reform? Who on earth could be interested in reformism? The Russians as oppressors? Well, of course.

Nothing is more telling than the image with which Hamon and Rotman end their book. Two of May's leading figures, Serge Joly and Alain Geismar, set off in August 1968 for a cultural conference in Havana, to be presided over by their hero, Fidel. When their plane made its obligatory stop in Prague the two men walked the streets without much interest — though events there were on the brink of their tragic climax. Arriving in Havana, they heard the news of the Soviet invasion, and were vaguely shocked when Fidel made no mention at all of the Paris Events but supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The *Realpolitik* of this seemed wholly to escape them: that as a small, threatened Communist outpost, Cuba had no wish to give gratuitous offence to the French government but every reason to acclaim energetic Soviet action to protect Communist régimes elsewhere. Joly and Geismar, feeling distressed and uneasy, decided to cut their visit short and return home. Meanwhile, Régis Debray sent an indignant letter of protest to Castro. No mean feat — the letter had to be smuggled out — for Debray had heard the news on his transistor while sweating out time in a far-away Bolivian jail, where he had been landed by his own pilgrimage after Che Guevara.

spread in France as elsewhere.

If M de Broglie were a linguist, and not simply a well-meaning patriot, he would realize that there is no one essential language of humanity, but that all languages, in their different ways, contribute to this ideal. French has made a unique contribution in the past through historical accident, and for the time being at least, it has had to yield to English in the world *lingua franca*. But how serious a matter is this if, within their borders, fifty million exceptionally lively and articulate individuals continue to speak to each other in French? Knowing them as we do, we cautiously count on them to go on generating enough Frenchness to give a pungent seasoning to world culture.

There is some truth in these remarks, although they are all debatable. They are followed, unfortunately, by a strange paragraph about the supposed limitations of English:

Le vocabulaire anglais est... plus instable et imprécis que le français. Il est conventionnel et utile, comme l'argot. Les mots courts, monosyllabiques, nouveaux, les sigles utilisés comme noms y pullulent. Les mots composés par simple juxtaposition s'y forment sans logique ni clarté. Ils expriment des rapprochements, des tendances, des pseudo-notions forgées par commodité mais dans la confusion et l'ambiguïté.

Thoblinkered generalizing only serves to show that Broglie, while he may, as he claims, have some knowledge of English, is devoid of any real feeling for the language. He is an example of linguistic insularity, a phenomenon as wide-

Top notch among the nobs

Robin Buss

PATRICK LINDSAY BOWLES
Anglais chlc, anglais choc
180pp. Paris: Flammarion. fr. 70.
2 08 064887 X

As an American of British descent and education living in Paris, Patrick Lindsay Bowles possesses the basic qualifications for his task of explaining the social nuances of the English language to French readers. He also has wit and a fund of anecdotes, and appears to move in the kind of society that determines what is and what is not *bon chic, bon genre* on both sides of the Atlantic and the Channel.

Nevertheless, the enterprise is full of pitfalls. As Bowles points out, the number of social varieties of English is enormous; and, though he confines himself to British and the United States (with many supporting illustrations from French and one from Swahili), he is dealing with idioms that are constantly changing. From time to time, *Anglais chlc, anglais choc* reads like an entry for a competition inviting passages of misleading advice to foreigners.

In any case, the "Frenchman" or "Frenchwoman" who tries to adopt Bowles' indiscriminate list as a guide to correct usage will step off with a *faux pas*. Foreigners, unless they can pass as native speakers, are preferred when it can be assumed that they are unfamiliar with local custom. In Japan, this assumption is so

deeply embedded that Western speakers of the language may simply remain unheard. French visitors, armed with Bowles, are sensibly advised to ask for the lavatory rather than the bog, the throne, or the thirty other synonyms listed under *non begb* (they would probably have done so in any case); but they should not put too much faith in his assertions that *bag whispering* is both *très charmant* and *extrêmement employé* in polite society for "drunk", that *scoff* is the word for "food", or that *absolutely topping*, *thanks awfully* and *by notch* are in general use.

However, these would be trifling quibbles. Quite clearly *begb* himself, Bowles is diverting and in the main helpful to anyone rummaging in the top drawer. He includes a lengthy appendix on correct forms of address for members of the aristocracy. But there is an implicit assumption that his reader will want to ask with "the nobs", rather than with those who might describe them as such. Heaven help the innocent who tries, on the authority of *Anglais chlc, anglais choc*, oblivious of its errors in typography and confusions of usage, to pass for one of the lads: "nice to meet you, baby-oakes. How is the hubbly (sic) doing, snoozola, perhaps? Would you like some cement or do you imbibed? Mine's a merry... sic, as Bowles would say). It is not the *chic*, but these readers, liable to be regarded as badly trained enemy agents, who should cling to the maxim: "never explain, never complain, never explain."

Audible truths

Wilfrid Mellers

JOSCELYN GODWIN (Editor)
Music, Mysticism and Magic: A Sourcebook
349pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £25.
071020904 5
JAMES MCKINNON (Editor)
Music in Early Christian Liturgy
180pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
052130497 0

Many bookshops have among their shelves a specialized, slightly suspect section labelled Occult: to which category *Music, Mysticism and Magic* would seem, on the evidence of its title, to be relegated. The evidence misleads, for the book is an anthology of what philosophers and theologians, as well as, or rather than, composers, have said throughout the ages about what music is and is for. The book is esoteric and hermetic only in so far as music, of its nature, is more abstract than the other arts: whereas painting and sculpture, even when belonging to the genres described as abstract, to a degree imitate reality, and whereas literary effects acts of communication by way of signs similar to those we employ in normal speech, music is a semiotic language — if language it be — that functions on its own terms. Its meanings are more basic than those of the other arts. Its imitative properties, to the extent that they exist in (say) the hemianness of Rameau's *coucou* or the cuckoldry of Beethoven's cuckoo, are superficial, even trivial: its essence lies in its relation to the science of number. This is why our progressive Western world, though it has tended to forget that all art is revelation as well as incarnation, has never totally denied the religious implications of music, an ultimate repository of truth.

Music, Mysticism and Magic is accurately described as a source-book, for it collates accounts of music's nature and function throughout the history and prehistory of the Western world, bringing in other (Oriental and African) cultures only in so far as they have directly impinged on Western thought and feeling. Unsurprisingly, the first section, headed "Classical", is less overtly concerned with music than with philosophy and cosmology; it embraces, however, concepts fundamental to the Western musical mind, from Plato's creation myth, through the descriptions of musical harmony in relation to embryology offered in the Corpus Hermeticum and Cocconius, to Plotinus' concept of Universal Harmony. Pythagoras' complementary accounts of music as a revelation of divine order (scientifically in the Harmonic Series, religiously in the Eleusinian Mysteries) and as a guide to and moulder of human conduct, recur in sundry guises across the centuries; nor is there a radical change of front when, with Synesius, Martinus Capella and Boethius, the Classical merges into the Christian world. We would understand this better if Boethius had completed the musical sections of his immense treatise on the speculative mathematical sciences, but enough survives to illuminate the distinctions and also the interlinkings between *musica mundana* (the Music of the Spheres), *musica humana* (music uttered by human voices) and *musica instrumentalis* (music made through man-constructed instruments, using dead matter in the interests of spiritual life). The last-named category is possible but precarious, since matter always threatens with its materiality.

This view also pervades Judaic and Islamic mystical thought, which complements Classical sources. In the legacy of Christian Europe, Joscelyn Godwin inserts a section from these writers before proceeding to the Middle Ages proper; and although the writings of Philo, Isaac Ben Solomon and the Brathre of Purity are often too strictly metaphysical to be apprehensible in terms of Western music, it would seem that angels, in or above whatever culture they spread their wings, sing in comparably dulcet tones and with the same respect for geometric principles: "No one who reads the Apocalypses will doubt that the angels in the Apocalypse also praise God by means of the discipline. There is no disparity between the one: band and the description of the heavenly music of the Rumi Song of the Reed Pipe or his 'Remembrances of the Melodies

of Paradise", and on the other hand the Christian accounts of angelic music presented by Dionysius the Areopagite or the School of Chartres, not to mention individualized audible "visions" recounted by a Richard Rolle or Henry Suso.

For us, by far the most rewarding sections of the book are those covering Europe's Renaissance and post-Renaissance, for it was then that the modern world was painfully in labour and triumphantly born. Music as a revelatory science of number merges into a science of mind and understanding in the modern sense; or rather the new science becomes a means whereby supernatural elements in human experience may be, or may seem to be, partially under man's conscious control. In the treatises of Ficino, Cornelius Agrippa and Zarlino, the equilibrium between magic and mind, spiritual understanding and intellectual comprehension, intuitive improvisation and literate harmonic and tonal proportion is exact: all musical intervals have precise relationships to human intellect, sense and the autonomous functions of habit, for "human music is the harmony which may be known by any person who turns to contemplation of himself. It is that which mingles the incorporeal energy of reason with the body... that joins together the parts of the soul, and keeps the irrational part united with the rational." Half a century later, Johannes Kepler — one of the supreme minds of Europe — defined "the metaphysics of harmony" with a profundity still unrivalled. Most later theorists of music, such as Kircher and Werckmeister, owe much or nearly all to Kepler in discussing the interlacing of music's human with its cosmological and astrological connotations.

Significantly, it was at this time that great composers were most intimately in tune with the musical philosophers, as is evident from Dowland's Christianized Platonism based on the Orphic lute, or Bach's audibly numerical theology, often directly indebted to the mathematical and tonal speculations of Werckmeister. More peripheral composers, such as John Bull, had no less intimate affinities with more peripheral (though no less ambitious) cosmologists such as the Rosicrucian Robert Fludd, whose magical irrationality or nonsense is far from being a denial of experiential probity. Though Bull and Fludd may sometimes seem to us lunatic, they have a fundamental sanity that links them to Dowland and Zarlino, Bach and Kepler. Here indeed music is simultaneously revelation and incarnation.

During the Enlightenment and the Age of Romanticism the divine aspects of music became, as did the concept of genius, nearer allied to madness. True, Mozart's *Wunderkind* genius would seem musically to have operated in instantaneous "moments" of magic, whereby he became Europe's wisest musical humanist, who had no need to make overt reference to the Music of the Spheres — unless Talmio's flute and Papageno's bells may count as a Masonic transmutation of such. But for less Enlightened early romanticists such as Marazzi, Chateaubriand and Novalis, the Music of the Spheres, if no part of an accredited faith, is still a relevant notion — though to attain to such transcendence the artificial stimulus of drink or drugs may be necessary. (So was it, however, to the ancient shamans.) Even so, it is astonishing, and deeply moving, that the greatest nineteenth-century composers, Beethoven, should speak — in his famous conversation with Bettina — of his *raptus* in terms exactly comparable with those of Kepler, using the scientific parlance of his day ("I am electrical by nature") in a manner we now know to be precisely accurate, though by normal mortals it was then imperfectly understood. Beethoven is giving a psychological and physiological reinterpretation to ancient truths: as, more superficially, was Klatis in his account of dissonance within the psyche and Schopenhauer in his Jungian view of music as the cosmic Will.

The mathematical-psychological integration of Beethoven's vastly complex *Missa Solemnis* indeed "passes understanding", being "out of this world", although apprehensible only within it. Beethoven, in discovering rather than inheriting faith, is unique; lesser men of the early nineteenth century, like Schumann, want mad, metamorphosing the Music of the Spheres into a remoteless, A hammered

through the brain, while seeking desperate alleviation in synthetically mathematical contrivances like cryptograms. Wagner alone maintained, and on the whole justified, Beethovenian inspiration, though his Schopenhauerian Will seems, relative to Beethoven's, a mythically self-conscious rediscovery of the unconscious. This, in a sense a limitation, is also part of Wagner's status as "the beginning of modern music".

In the earlier sections of this compilation one may query this or the other selection of material; no two editors would come up with identical choices of what is representative or essential. None the less, each section contains substance enough to validate it, and one can have nothing but praise for the breadth of Godwin's learning, without which so ambitious a project would have been inconceivable. The final section on the twentieth century is, however, problematical, for it consists mainly of citations from the mystical musical philosophers like Rudolf Steiner, Pierre-Jean Juve and George Gurdjieff, who may be important if not fascinatingly verbose, but who weigh lightly when balanced by only two composers, one of them the minor and peripheral Cyril Scott. Admittedly, it makes a point that the book should end with Stockhausen who, as musicologist-scientist-priest, has been phenomenologically concerned with "music and the Centers of Man", "the Composer and the Spirit", and with an approach towards a "new" religious music which is also — as this book has demonstrated — as old as the hills. None the less, how much more persuasive the case would have been if Stockhausen's descent (or ascent?) from traditional Western music had been traced by way of his relationships to Schoenberg, Webern and Messiaen, all of whom directly affected him, and have made pronouncements about music's mathematical divinity. Schoenberg, climax to modern Europe's post-Wagnerian expressionism, sought salvation in the mathematical permutations of 12 and 7 in his apotheosis of Western man, "lunatically" dis-

guised as Pierrot who yearns for the magical moon. Webern reinstated philosophical mathematics as rigidly as a medieval composer, stating that "the row is God's will". Messiaen annealed Western harmonic tensions in the metrically pre-ordained order of Oriental *tal, moqnam ur pater*. Musically, there is no break in magical continuity from the nineteenth into the twentieth century; Schoenberg even contrived to die on his astrologically appointed day.

Godwin misses a (divinely) golden opportunity in failing to demonstrate how John Cage's notorious silent piece (on the philosophy of which the composer has discoursed) fulfils the knobbly prognosis that the ultimate end of music is silence, when matter, inherent even in the human voice as well as in man-made instruments, dissolves away, and the external melody "resounds in the interior of man". In this context it is hardly surprising that the Fathers of the early Christian Church seem to have preferred silence to music — on the evidence of *Music in Early Christian Liturgy*, an anthology compiled by James McKinnon, and moving from New Testament times to around an AD 450. This is a book to be grateful for, since the extremes are intelligently selected and helpfully commented on, while the new translations are as lucid as may be expected with such opaque writings. The book goes some way to sorting out the ambiguous, enigmatic, often contradictory accounts of elating relationships between liturgy that was spoken, chanted, sung and instrumentally accompanied. Despite the assemblations of string instruments with divine order by way of Pythagorean tuning, the paranoid hatred and fear of "pagan" instruments manifest over several centuries boggles the would-be rational mind. On the whole the book leaves one (or at least I leave this reviewer) depressedly aware that the Christian God indeed works in a mysterious way, though whether he performs wonders remains a moot — as well as ideologically mute — point.

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done nt home). Among much else, he glosses Bennett's enigmatic last words on his deathbed ("The bill, the bill!") in a way savagely critical of Dorothy. According to Swinerton, what poor Bennett was communicating was his desire to cut Dorothy loose, by paying whatever sum she wanted to leave him to die in peace.

With all these preliminary bouts one turns with eagerness to Hepburn's new evidence and the expert interpretations he brings to it. If anything, he seems favourable to Marguerite, emphasizing the real sexual satisfaction the younger woman was able to bring Bennett in the early years of the marriage, an excitement which evidently remained to the end, despite all vexations. Hepburn points by contrast to a rather sad aside in a later letter to Dorothy, complaining at her Anglo-Saxon pruderies:

I imagine you in all sorts of responsive and acquiescent states, and in all sorts of states of allure, and abandoning yourself to all those pleasures which you really desire but which something in you inhibits you from appearing to desire.

Hepburn also plays down the supposed graspingness of Marguerite, which he evidently sees far from it was, a symptom of the pain and humiliation she felt on being cast out.

Without going quite as far as Swinerton, Hepburn comes down strongly against Dorothy. And on the last two pages of this volume he gives the dignity of print to what he (rather inadequately) calls "extraordinary tales about her that circulated for many years":

One of them was that she was sexually involved with Richard [Bennett], the author's nephew, and was caught with him even as Bennett lay dying, another that she was directly and consciously responsible for Bennett's death. Swinerton rejects the first and accepts the second metaphorically. In the second matter he records two details. He himself stood with Dorothy in the room where Bennett lay and he saw

her suddenly observe a ring on the little finger of Bennett's left hand. "To my horror," he says, "she moved quickly across the room, wrenched the ring from his finger, and said, 'I'm sure he'd wish me to have this.' Some minutes later, at her request he went up to H. G. Wells's flat to ask Wells to come down to see her. He found Wells in tears. "He almost screamed 'No I won't! She's a bitch; and she killed Arnold!'"

Taken in context with the first words of the first volume ("I am particularly grateful to Mrs Dorothy Bennett for her helpfulness and forbearance in the selecting of letters") these are indeed extraordinary stories to finish with. And one perceives no indication of editorial dissension. But Hepburn has more. The final entry in the fourth volume is a transcribed letter on Bennett's death from one sister, Fanny Gertrude, to another, Tertia. It concludes with a summary of medical causes: "The acute inflammation of gall bladder was the seat of infection and responsible for relapse and reinfection. Meaning Dorothy!" Again there is no editorial dissension from this blunt accusation and one assumes that Hepburn tacitly concurs. It is a sensational ending.

In his account of Volume Three of the *Letters* (September 11, 1971) the anonymous TLS reviewer praised Hepburn's edition as a "model for such enterprises". I don't agree with that complacent, if only because I think that as an editor Hepburn has had quite abnormal demands made upon him. I don't think this is a model of scholarly editorship so much as a supreme triumph of editorial will and fair-mindedness: over persistent mendacity, over abundant but lop-sided primary material and possibly (I suspect) bloody-mindedness on the part of various copyright holders. James Hepburn has, in my view, succeeded magnificently in what must have been one of the more arduous tasks required of a modern scholar.

inspired him to the tactful vindication of flamboyance and outrageousness. Pearson himself veered between the conventional and the reckless. He advised others to caution, but could be self-destructively incautious himself. When asked in the witness box, by Sir Henry Curtis-Bennett, why he had kept up the "pose" that Sir Rendell Rodd had written his book as spoof diplomatic memoirs, *The Whispering Gallery*, long after it was clearly exposed, he replied, "Because I was mad." The jury was delighted by his candour and - against all the odds - he was acquitted of obtaining money fraudulently from his publishers, who had been frightened into betraying him, though they were well aware of the circumstances. English justice was seldom more English, or more just.

Pearson married a woman whom he had impregnated, but he ceased to sleep with Gladys after the birth of the consequent son, Henry, who was killed in the Spanish Civil War, following a violent breach with his father occasioned by the boy's undergraduate assertion that Shakespeare would have been a better writer if he had read *Das Kapital*. For Pearson the one was beyond improvement and the other unreadable, even when work on Bernard Shaw's biography might have required its study. Pearson is alleged to have done the reading for, and written half of, the Shaw between autumn and Christmas 1939. This suggests a capacity for literary and historical digestion of a rare order. His methods certainly produced palatable work, as the latest paperback reissues (see below) prove (though his *Bernard Shaw* is too winsome by three quarters). Only André Maurois is his equal, perhaps his superior, in affectionate and well-researched popularization, no mean art.

Jan Hunter adopts a rather similar style in his biography. But he yields a little too amply to sentimentality. After Pearson has proved notably callous over the death of an Arab, knocked down by accident in Baghdad during the First World War, Professor Hunter remarks: "Three years of desert warfare, years of heat, disease and death, had corroded his sensibilities." This is prosaic basking, not character analysis. And if Hunter is nimble among the published sources, it is hard to excuse a failure to resolve the "mystery" of how Pearson came to be given the M.C.B., for instance, checking the citation. As it is, Hesketh has been

Showing willing

Rosalie Mander

JAN MARSH
Jane and May Marria: A biographical story
1839-1938
328pp. Pandora. £12.95.
0863581137
PETER FAULKNER (Editor)
Jane Morris to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: Letters,
with extracts from Blunt's diaries
133pp. Exeter University Press. £15.
089892239

It has always been a mystery how Jane Burden spent the two years between meeting the young artist working on the Oxford Union murals and her marriage, in 1859, to William Morris, who was one of them. It is generally agreed that the "stunner", a groom's daughter, spent it in being educated: as Jan Marsh puts it in *Jane and May Morris*, "given a crash course in middle-class manners, sent to some kind of ladies' seminary or finishing academy". Isn't it possible (a suggestion not previously put forward) that she went to live with Mrs McLaren, the wife of the fencing master Alexander McLaren, who owned a gymnasium? "Fencing master" calls up some picture of a rough ex-sergeant-major, but McLaren and his wife were highly educated and accepted socially. He commissioned Burne-Jones, whom he knew as an undergraduate, to illustrate his book of fairy stories and fairy lore, but after Burne-Jones came under Pre-Raphaelite influence he was ashamed of the drawings and only allowed three to be published (anonymously). Mrs McLaren was accustomed to coaching boys (the son of Thomas Hughes among them) and in due course founded Summerfield Pre-

paratory School. Jane was receptive; in later life she adored the novels that Mrs Rossetti sent to Kelmscott Manor for something more serious, and was quite able to fit in with staying at Naworth Castle.

She belied her amazing looks in many ways. Though stately she was not stiff, but had a good sense of humour, as her daughter May bore witness: there is a letter which records how she and Rossetti were once turned out of a séance for giggling. It was when she was bored that she withdrew. She is so often accepted as a "dark silent medieval woman" because Henry James found her on a sofa with medieval tooled leather, but it is not possible that she didn't want to bother with him? Similarly with Bernard Shaw, who called her "the silentest woman I ever knew" (how many ever got a word in anyway?). He had only seen her enduring the young Fabians who came to Sunday dinner at Kelmscott - where for him she did produce her famous remark: "Will you have some more pudding? There is suit in it."

It is through the images of her created by Morris and Rossetti that we know her, but to look at her for herself she is really completely uninteresting. The one event of her life in which she came into her own, fortunately not too late for her, was her meeting Wilfrid Scawen Blunt when she was forty. It was commonplace enough for a woman to fall for Blunt: noted Arabist, horseman and rebel, he made the most of his weeks in Dublin and knew he still looked handsome in prison clothes, wearing the cap at a rakish angle; he was a philanderer of some skill. Blunt first sought out Jane because he wanted to know more about Rossetti, whose poetry he greatly admired. When he found she had other ideas he was not the man to hold back. Clearly he was the first time Jane enjoyed sexual experience; Morris had been uninterested and Rossetti incompetent. When they found themselves under the same roof together she would leave pangs in his room to indicate her willingness.

As far as Rossetti that no pangs blossomed in Cheyne Walk. Jane would come there from Kelmscott House, further up the Embankment, and consent to pose for a little in the studio at the back, or else retire to the first-floor room with its four large windows facing south over the river (the house was never the gloomy mansion of present-day imagination). It was in the wicker armchair that suited her best, incongruous though it looked among Rossetti's antique bric-a-brac, the Sheraton chair and Utrecht velvet clairs. The last word on Jane might well be that of Mrs Angell, daughter of William Michael Rossetti, when the renowned letters first came free: "I don't think she was much good to either of them."

Dr Marsh gives useful accounts of the work and the personalities involved in the Arts and Crafts movement, centred on May Morris. She was primarily a very talented embroiderer, though she designed silverware and jewellery also, and started a small class for the village and Scottish side he was related to the Countess of Oxford and the Duchess of Rutland. Later he was asked by the Durham miners to stand in the labour interest. . . . Curious, he said with a smile, that he should have boxed the compass in this way. . . . The Captain's harangue was too much for Kingsmill, and when Pearson removing his pipe ejaculated, "All three parties. God bless my soul Capital!" he rose . . . and buried upstairs.

The Captain, having returned with a file of press cuttings about himself, settled to a monologue to which Pearson made the occasional polite interjection of "Ha" and "Do say" and "Indeed". The contrast between his friend's predilection (of boredom) and his ostensible show of interest was straining Kingsmill's patience. When Pearson, removing his pipe, affirmed, "All three parties. God bless my soul Capital!" it was more than Kingsmill could bear.

This mutilation may be rather more than a reader cares to bear, since the point of the latter passage is lost without knowledge of the former. Professor Hunter has filleted his sources and dispensed with the flesh. When preparing anecdotes, it is worth recalling the root meaning of the term, which implies something not previously published.

Hesketh Pearson *Bernard Shaw*. 320pp. Allen and Unwin. Paperback. £7.95. 0 04 928072 4.
Conan Doyle. 190pp. Allen and Unwin. Paperback. £6.95. 0 04 928071 6.
A Life of Shakespeare. 230pp. Hamish Hamilton. Paperback. £7.95. 0 241 12006 3.
Walter Scott *His Life and Personality*. 295pp. Hamish Hamilton. Paperback. £7.95. 0 241 32005 9.

Paratime regained

Colin Greenland

JAMES MORROW
This Is the Way the World Ends
319pp. Gallancz. £10.95.
0 575 03972 8
FREDERICK POHL
The Coming of the Quantum Cats
243pp. Gallancz. £9.95.
0 575 04016 5

These days, dominated by the dreams of America - its armed anxieties, its narcissistic nationalism - and aiming for a broader mass-market simplicity than ever, science fiction seems to be consolidating into didacticism and reassurance, crystallizing into fable. The disintegratory innovations and formal experiments of the 1960s have been left behind; except where they have been calcified into new bodies of technique. *This Is the Way the World Ends* would not have been possible without the work of Kurt Vonnegut.

James Morrow is a writer whose fabulation is conscious and sophisticated. He tells a tale of global nuclear devastation from which six men are rescued and taken, by palatial submarine, to stand trial for this last crime of the human race before an international tribunal of the

Unadmitted. These are the people who would have been born if their parents had not been killed in the war; so great was their anger that they forced themselves into the world, in bodies gestated out of the Antarctic ice, each with a year to live at the prime of their hypothetical career. Black blood runs in their veins.

The six defendants are all white Americans, exemplifying the régime that loosed the bombs rather than the species as a whole. Four are directly concerned with nuclear weapons or policies; a fifth is a right-wing evangelist, advocate of a militaristic Christianity. The sixth, the central figure of the book, representing the common man, is George Paxton, a monumental mass.

The obliquity, the calculated bathos of this detail, at once absurd and symbolic, sentimental and grim, is the key in Morrow's method, signifying what he has learned from the Vonnegut of *Cat's Cradle* and *Shogun-house-Five*. Here is all the mannered casualness, the ironic relation of armageddon through trivia, and the flattery with anti-narrative, by pre-empting the plot in a framing lecture by Nostradamus (with slides by Leonardo da Vinci). Stylistic richness is achieved by over-selling every term with emphasis. When Paxton thinks of his lost infant daughter, "the hallucinated sound of her

oooooh's and ahhhhh's was like a jagged bronze bell implanted in his skull".

After a first half of such ruthlessly emotive matter, the book gains considerably in substance and steadiness from Morrow's display at the trial itself of careful research into the linguistic subtleties of the nuclear debate. More effective than anything on the noisy and colourful surface is the way he contrives to sustain the promise of a magical thirteenth-hour reprieve, and then refuses to deliver: challenging, by activating it, our habit of hope, both as readers and as subjects of the nuclear age.

Hope is not excluded but celebrated and rewarded by the element of fable in *The Coming of the Quantum Cats*, from page 204 onwards. Before that the plot is made up of mysteries and martial machinations predicated on the multiverse hypothesis of quantum physics. The principle that there are an infinite number of equivalent but separate realities generated by each decisive moment in the history of the universe is nothing new in SF. It has been exploited for exotic drama by Jack Williamson and Harry Harrison, among others; and it unfolds, so far as anything could be said to, the entire sprawling oeuvre of Michael Moorcock. Here, Frederick Pohl gently rehearses some of the incongruities that proliferate when a denizen of one "paratime" visits another and dis-

covers the self they might have become: Dominic De Sota the estate agent meets Dominic De Sota the senator; the musician, the physicist.

Despite introducing an America where Nancy Reagan is President, and another where Jerry Brown is, it is not Pohl's skill as a social satirist that is being exercised on this outing. The point is that Major De Sota is leading an invasion of Senator De Sota's America, which is allied with Russia, as a transdimensional bypass for a secret attack on the hated Russia of his own world. Other realities become involved because penetration between paratimes triggers unpredictable oscillations: people and things popping in and out of existence with disastrous consequences.

There being no brake on this escalation, Pohl ultimately produces a sane and rational race from a paratime so advanced they know how to pull out the plug. On page 204 they ship all those responsible and their displaced victims away, not to stand trial but to populate a deserted paratime, where they will decide to be good and build utopia out of sheer relief. In an infinite multiverse, the existence of kind faires is only logical, indeed inevitable; but they are conspicuously absent from our world, towards whose end we proceed unhindered, according to James Morrow, even by the rage of our descendants.

Getting involved

Antony Beevor

RICHARD APPIGNANESI
Destroying America: Italia Perversa, part three
315pp. Quartet. £9.95.
0704325098

Destroying America is the final slah of Richard Appignanesi's "Italia Perversa" trilogy; in a way, the tombstone. One puts down the book with a sigh of relief at having nothing more to do with his unattractive cast. The term "characters" would be inaccurate, since his lahryrhine, politico-freudian puppet-show lacks humanity in almost every sense; the story cannot bear the weight of its intellectual pretensions.

The central figure, Piero Orson, alias Orsini, alias Ossafinghi, is a psychiatric theorist as well as part-time Québécois urban guerrilla. In this volume, his background is finally revealed. His childhood was eventful, to say the least. An infant prodigy as a pianist, he dresses up one day (aged thirteen) in his aunt's clothes, and shoots his uncle on the stairs. His uncle, only wounded, sends him to a Catholic reformatory and there a priest smashes his fingers to make sure that he never plays again.

A great deal of space is devoted to Piero's ancestry, but to follow all the ramifications requires excessive concentration. It helps to assume that more or less everybody has been

sexually involved with everybody else, as often as not in a brutal or distasteful fashion; if they are closely related, it is virtually certain.

A radical answer to *Dynasty* may well have been part of the author's plan, since the "America" of the title refers to the international pervasiveness of Coca Cola culture. Yet the book (hegum, we are told, in 1967) has a very dated feel, with its discursions and random quotations, shameless over-writing and self-indulgent streams-of-consciousness. The flashes of brilliance are much rarer than in the earlier volumes, and although Appignanesi's disregard, almost contempt, for his reader can at moments command an disbeliefing admiration, it usually exasperates.

Even after three volumes, it is difficult to work out exactly what effects the author finally intended. One or two themes are extremely interesting - the idea, for example, of Marxism's Oedipal relationship with religion, particularly Catholicism. The development of Victor Serge's ideas on "the mechanism of history" in the second volume was tantalizing. But the promising threads soon run out, and we are left wondering whether the trilogy is trying to be the *Buddenbrooks* of the left or merely the swan-song of western, middle-class revolutionaries, now an endangered species. The author's leitmotif - "sometimes a funeral is a beginning" - contains a wishful hint that God, the revolutionary Son, will rise again. If he turns out to be like Piero and his companions, the prospect is unappealing.

Thinking thin

Robin Rusher

M. J. FITZGERALD
Connection
£26pp. Picaador. £8.95.
0 330 29905 0

The eponymous instrument in M. J. Fitzgerald's first novel is the "concertina in time, of the fading of primitive sounds as past, present and future meshed into end and beginning". The "elashing of plaintive sounds" weaves a life story from Coriolo's memories and reflections, the fore and hindsight of her consciousness at different ages, from earliest childhood to death-bed.

It is an anomaly novel, in both the common and the psycho-sensory. The insistent "why's" and "what if's" of earlier phases of Coriolo's life yield, often in mid-sentence, to more reflective versions of events seen from her seventy-fifth year. Sexuality and anorexia are two of the main experiences of the novel, and so interpenetrating that her first taste of food after deciding to eat again gives her an orgasm through to the end for its own sake alone.

M. J. Fitzgerald's prose continually escapes realism for the freer flights of subjectivity. Sense often crumples altogether, leaving confusion and uncertainty: the details of history collapse in the hazy memories of the very old, the dense mesh of interconnection, incident and coincidence leaving the reader as disoriented as the dying seventy-five-year-old musing on it all. The slipperiness of words and the difference between words and the reality they hint at is as much the theme of the book as Coriolo's life; unfortunately, the monnered delicacy of touch sits rather uneasily on the fragments of a plot that makes *Dallas* seem tepid.

Another story about a woman's life that takes a quite different approach comes to mind: Flaubert's "Un Cleur Simple", written when positivism still ruled, presents a much simpler life but also, through detail and distance, asserts the unknowability of another. Fitzgerald's novel provides its own clue to her approach to this cold paradox:

Coriolo at seventy five laughed in her sleep, knowing one word was, after all enough, and that the search through subtlety was doomed to failure. But nonetheless necessary.

Roz Kaveney

JOAN AIKEN
Deception
288pp. Gallancz. £10.95.
0 575 04026 5

In the novels of Joan Aiken we inhabit the same never-never-land version of a world that really existed as in those of Georgette Heyer. In the work of both, we find long cosh sides lecher mislaid and false identities adopted; we find large and eccentric families, played for laughs that are unmixed with the bitter irony of Jane Austen, the author both Aiken and Heyer imitate to the degree that happens to suit them and in whose Regency world their novels are, for the most part, set. We find the choice of lovers from a variety of suitors played for sensation, rather than, as in Austen, figuring the bonds which sustain society. Both have combined motifs from watered-down Gothic with "respectable" narrative elements from literary high comedy to produce something that is clearly a genre - even if they are the only practitioners of it.

But there are important differences as well. Heyer simply wrote before the rise of feminism in the 1970s and 80s, and the daydreams she created necessarily involved charismatic heroes as well as flighty and witty heroines. The heroine of Aiken's *Deception* is offered the choice of a choice between the handsome but treacherous man and the dull and reliable one;

she not only refuses to choose, but is amazed that anyone should consider such a choice relevant to her aspirations. In Aiken there are genuinely pathetic and poignant moments, where in Heyer incidents rarely have any lasting impact save as facilitators of plot; this means that there are always emotional loose ends in Aiken's historical romances, where Heyer was able to achieve something more closely approximating perfection of form. Aiken does not have the same capacity for quietly lunatic invention as her predecessor; her moments of fun produce a smile, where Heyer's often make it a stage or two further.

In *Deception*, then, the aspiring and impoverished American novelist Alvey is prevailed upon by her priggish school-mate and double Louise to take her place as dutiful daughter while Louise goes off to convert the heathen. Alvey finds herself in a household with more than its fair ration of problems - aerbic, dying grandmother, vapid gardening mother, enippled and alienated older son, epileptic and secretly Mithras-worshipping younger one, slimy vicar and mysteriously drowned bastard. Being, as she is, an effective heroine in this sort of book, Alvey takes charge of those things she can manage to intervene effectively in; but, since this is a novel by Joan Aiken in the 1980s rather than Georgette Heyer in the 1950s, her field of action and the chances of success are limited. Besides, Alvey has her novel to finish; there is never a sense that she or her author are playing the game through to the end for its own sake alone.

Self-portrait with a Slide by HUGO WILLIAMS

Assembled with me on the long slide
are breakfast, lunch and tea,
their preparation and consumption by me
and the washing up afterwards
stacked and waiting in the sink.
I have to go down the slide, balancing a tray
both full and empty, hot and cold,
looking both hungry and satisfied,
bored, excited and tired. I stand at the top
in pyjamas and dressing gown.
I mustn't forget my mat.

Mornings are dizzying, looking over the edge
at a stub of pencil
lying on the breakfast table
after I have cleared away the things.
I have been standing on the landing until now,
indicating my face
with a slick index finger,
not wanting to hurt myself going down.
The monitor taps me on the shoulder: time to go.
I rise to my toes
and throw off my dressing gown.
I raise one hand in the air.
Pieces of coastline and sky
are dragged across my sight
as I swerve to avoid the bathroom.
We're off, I suppose,
if a wave of homesickness is anything to go by.

Now the long slope of the day
pitches forward slightly,
causing me to stumble.
Papers and books pile up behind my back,
anxious to pass me and get on.
Washing tangles my feet.
The sofa, the horse ride, the supermarket
nudge and buffet one another,
lurching to one side.
I come out of a spiral
clinging to the handrail for my life.
I overtake my stereo, stuck in the last groove
of *Lift to the Scaffold*.

My eyes are cast down
as if from modesty or embarrassment.
My half-closed hands
lie on the table in front of me
where I can see them. From the way I am sitting
staring at a sheet of paper,
something would seem to be the matter.
Perhaps I am ill?
Or the temperature of my pen won't come down?
I lean over myself
with a concerned expression on my face,
as if I am visiting.
I think of something kind to say.
How am I feeling today?
What would I like to eat?
My pen moves jerkily over the paper
for a moment, like the needle of an instrument
for recording brain-life.
From the other side of the street
I look like someone writing.

I've changed a lot in the last five minutes.
I'm not here most of the time.
I'm over here behind the door.
I'm willing to turn a blind eye

to some of the things I do,
but I like to know where I am
in case I have to go out.
It's sad to see me going so far away all alone,
but I have my permission to come back
whenever I like
and start again.
I can't remember where I was.
I forgot to mark my place.

Is the stub of pencil where I left it,
arrested in mid-flight?
If I lean out,
I can touch it with my finger as I pass.
I can't get hold of it.
One false move
and it drifts out of reach
behind the breakfast tray, vibrating uselessly.
If I could nudge it into the upright position
I might feel able
to describe the kind of grip
that would hold it still for a moment
while I concentrate.
My eyelids droop
and I have a more interesting experience
for a few seconds, working in plasticine.

Now everything is slipping through my fingers
into the next-door room
where I am trying not to slide down to the kitchen
for a bite to eat.
Can you feel the wind brushing my face
as I shoot across the kitchen into the hall?
My hair flies out behind me,
making me look free,
but I am in the street, alas,
wasting time shopping. I dig in my heels
and my hair flies forward in my eyes. Dogs bark
as I peer into my house while I am out.

I thought I had found a way down
through the system of snacks and mood changes
that constitutes an average day
on the slide,
but I have lost my footing
in the loose hours before tea.
I veer from side to side.
I throw my tray in the air.
So much rubble has broken loose
since this morning began so promisingly
with a friendly push from behind
that I scramble on all fours
across an escarpment of coffee cups.
I lose my way in the dark.

Is this The End coming up to meet me
waving excitedly? I reach out my hand
to touch the patch of sunlight or yellow lichen
on the bedroom window-sill –
shadowy patches of fungus,
or the yellow primer showing through?
It's hard to tell
when the pencil hovers in mid-air
leaving only a blur.
I thought I had reached ground level
and could shake the Champagne bottle
to a celebratory fizz,
but this looks like the start of something new.
The monitor gives me a push and down I go,
uttering involuntary cries.

Letters

The Advancement of Science

Sir, – As translator (into French) of some of Gerald Holton's essays, and as a student of his work, I was somewhat dismayed by Brian Pippard's review of Professor Holton's *The Advancement of Science, and its Burdens*, in your issue of July 17. How uninformatively dismissive can one get? In an article two-thirds of a page long, appearing some nine months after the event, Sir Brian manages not to mention a single one of the main issues informing the book, and Holton's work at large: we are to be content with the notion that it "departs considerably" from the Popperian vulgate, thus affording prospects of, and "material for, leisurely and enjoyable discussion" – in private, obviously (*Nicht vor den Kindern*)?

The rest of the review is devoted to: scoring off poor copy-preparation and/or proof-reading (indeed, "electron paramagnetic resonance" has nothing whatever to do with the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) paradox, p163; but then, "Schlipp" is a poor substitute for "Schlipp", p53 – and so on: fair enough, as far as this goes); querying the coupling, in one study, of Heisenberg and Oppenheimer (thus conclusively missing the point of that chapter, which was to contrast national "styles" in making science, by looking at two emblematic figures); being irked by the word "despair", rather than "desperation" (while allowing that "despair" is "apparently [sic] used by many scientists"); and telling Holton to stop looking at the "Everest-climbers", and get on with the "humbler achievements" – such as suggesting a miracle formula which would wrest presidential advisers and educationalists out of their slumbers, as he, Pippard, then modestly shows us how to achieve.

At the end of it all, we are none the wiser as to what Holton actually says – on Einstein, in particular ("nearly half of the book", but then, this is merely "the author's professional interest"), on the role of imagination in science, on the emergence (and conflict) of scientific world-views, on Holton's concept of themata as recurring features in scientific debates and theories of a quasi-aesthetic nature, and we are left guessing at Holton's own ("humbler") role as an educationalist, in the mainstream of the Harvard General Education programme, and as in how his ideas have helped generations of students, at university or high-school level, in the United States and elsewhere, who have used Holton's textbooks – or, indeed, how his ideas have had an impact on the policy-making establishment, via the report, *A Nation at Risk*, on the state of American education, in which he had a (recognizable) hand.

On a deeper level, fundamental issues of method are left to the connoisseurs (eg, the use

of "case studies", and the appearance of fragmentation it can produce, by exploring "in depth" the evolution of one distinctive individual, in his actual historic predicament, rather than drawing up the systematic panorama of a period, or following up one "problem" – or one notion – from its inception in its demise, or resolution); the deliberate concentration on the "uncommon men" (those who make science) rather than on the scientific community (those who do science), with its self-conscious element of myth-making (and unmaking), is glossed over (or dismissed out of hand), as is the explicit reference to cognitive psychology. The entire philosophical thrust of Holton's work, in a word, is lacking – not to mention a sense of the many different perspectives he manages to bring together, in his study of the history of science.

Brian Pippard's comments may pass muster at High Table; to publish them as they stand is, in effect, to disenfranchise the intelligent layman at whom a TLS review should be aimed. One could do worse than to ponder on the appearance, in Gerald Holton's book, of two of the most powerful legends of modern times: that of Dr Faust, and that of the Golem. One could do worse: Brian Pippard, for me, leaves them out of his account altogether.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS ROBERTS
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Charles Darwin

Sir, – In her letter of July 3 Fabienne Smith states that the view which holds that Charles Darwin's illness was psychosomatic in origin "is not based on any serious examination of his medical history", and that the real cause of Darwin's illness was that he was "an allergic" who "had a malfunctioning immune system". These are statements which ignore practically everything that is known about Darwin's illness.

My book, *To Be An Invalid: The Illness of Charles Darwin* (University of Chicago Press, 1977), is I believe the most detailed and comprehensive account of the subject, and is cited in Volumes One and Two of *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin* (Volume Two was reviewed in the TLS on June 12). In my book I show that, while Darwin's symptoms varied, the symptom which most incapacitated him was what he called "periodical vomiting" (*Correspondence*, 2, 270), and that this became especially severe in 1839–41, 1848–9 and 1863–5. During these times he experienced constant anxieties over his transmutation theory and over the failure of his theory about the origin of the parallel roads of Glen Roy, and successive anxieties over the sufferings of his wife during her ten pregnancies, the death of his father, and the illness of

of his children; and he frequently mentioned how his work upset his stomach. His upset stomach could have been functional, or caused by an ulcer (undiagnosed in Victorian times) which was then exacerbated by anxieties. The history of his "periodical vomiting" is much more typical of a psychosomatic than an "allergic" illness. In the latter instance one would expect changes in living conditions or in diet, whereas with Darwin these remained constant. During the last decade of his life, when he withdrew from scientific controversy, and when his family life was relatively quiet, Darwin's "periodical vomiting" ceased.

Mrs Smith bases the case for allergic illness on three points. First, in Chile, during October 1834, Darwin experienced an episode of illness which she diagnoses as an allergic collapse, caused by "great physical over-exertion and a highly allergenic diet on his pampas trips (literally nothing but beef and maté)", and an excess of cholera. But in March 1835 Darwin again went on strenuous pampas trips, and (presumably) again ate beef and maté and took cholera, and suffered no ill-effects. The October 1834 illness appears to have been a fever which affected "every secretion" of Darwin's body. It has been suggested that it was typhus, which was then endemic in Chile. Surely the possibility of an infectious illness should have been mentioned, along with that of an allergic illness.

Second, Smith states, "Darwin had eczema, a strong allergy clue". Eczema, of course, can have many causes, and Darwin never really defines what he means when he uses the term "eczema". Only once do we get a picture of Darwin's eczema from the recollections of his friend Hooker. Hooker recalls that during the mid-1840s Darwin would talk to him about the controversial transmutation theory. After this talk Darwin would, in the words of Hooker, suffer "an attack of violent eczema in the head during which he was hardly recognizable". Then he would recover, and happily talk to Hooker about non-controversial topics, without any mishap. Certainly, in these instances, Darwin's eczema appears to have had psychosomatic origins.

Third, Smith claims that "Darwin's family medical history also shows a strong allergy pattern". In *To Be An Invalid* (pp117–22), I summarized what is known about this topic, emphasizing that Darwin's particular symptoms appeared to be unique. Rereading these pages I do not see any particular allergy pattern.

Darwin, of course, may have had particular allergies. Just before going on the Beagle he wrote his sister Susan: "my hands are not quite well – & I have always observed, that if I once get them wet & change my manner of living about same time they will generally remain well" (*Correspondence* 1, 143). This is suggestive of an allergic condition. But there is no further reference to his hands in his letters. In *To Be An Invalid* I suggested (p142) that he may have suffered from allergies, or from toxic reactions, to the many different drugs that he took. However, there is no actual evidence for this.

The diagnosis of Darwin's illness will always be uncertain because today's precise methods of diagnosis did not exist in Victorian times. The best that can be done is to assemble all the evidence and then suggest which cause – among many possible causes – seems most likely. This has led me to postulate that Darwin's illness was largely caused by the psychic stresses I have mentioned. In order to establish a diagnosis of an "allergic" illness more evidence should be presented.

RALPH COLP, JR.
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Vernon Watkins

Sir, – In his review of Vernon Watkins's *Collected Poems* (July 3) Andrew Motion attributes the phrase "deep, but dazzling darkness" to Kathleen Raine, without observing that it is originally Henry Vaughan's:

There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazzling darkness
("The Night", 11.49–50)

CHRISTINE REES
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Browning Translations

Sir, – Daniel Karlin and John Woolford are right to distrust the attribution to Browning, in the Penguin edition by John Pettigrew and Thomas J. Collins, of ten brief translations from Anacreon (Letters, July 17); but they are not the first to do so. The attribution has been authoritatively dismissed by the leading authority on Browning's letters and MSS, Phillip Kelley, in *The Browning Collections: A reconstruction*, by Phillip Kelley and Betty A. Coley (1984).

Nine years ago Karlin and Woolford accepted as Browning's an interesting fragment, "Aeschylus' Soliloquy", of which they published an annotated transcript in *Browning Society Notes* for August 1978. This common attribution was likewise accepted by Pettigrew and Collins. In fact, however, the author of this piece was again Elizabeth Barrett. As Kelley and Coley point out, a draft of it occurs in a notebook of hers, now in the Huntington Library, which also contains drafts of *A Drama of Exile* and "There sits a lady in her hall".

This will explain why none of these pieces will be found in Volume Three of the Oxford English Texts edition of Browning, to be published at the beginning of next year.

IAN JACK
Penelope College, Cambridge.

Austria and the Arts

Sir, – I did not imply, as T. C. Robbins Landon suggests (Letters, July 24), that current anti-semitism is responsible for the Austrian Government's withdrawal of funding from the International Gustav Mahler Society in Vienna. Doubtless there are pressing financial reasons. Possibly the £4,500 saved will subsidize the upkeep of an elderly mother-in-law in a state-supported home.

Whatever the present fiscal restraints, they do not alter the fact that Mahler is perceived in Austria as an outsider. Where funds have been freely available in the past to Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Bruckner causes and festivals, major and minor alike, the composer with the single greatest influence on the music of our own time has been disowned by the Austrian State, in both pre-war and post-war republics.

In 1985, well before the furor surrounding the incumbent president, it took a donation by an American individual to shame the Austrian Government into helping restore Mahler's composing hut at Steinbach-am-Attersee from its previous use as a public lavatory. I cannot imagine the same contempt would be tolerated at a significant Haydn site.

NORMAN LEBRECHT
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Raymond Picard

Sir, – John Sturrock is inaccurate (July 3) when he supposes that Raymond Picard's *Nouvelle Critique, nouvelle Impure* has never been translated into English. In 1969 the Washington State University Press published *New Criticism or New Fraud*, translated by Frank Towne with quotations from Barthes's *Sur Racine* in both the original French and in Richard Howard's 1964 English rendition. As I pointed out to Raymond Picard at the time, the English translation of his work was adequate, if inelegant and often brutally literal.

None the less, there does exist an English version of *Nouvelle Critique* and since the embers of the Barthes-Picard quarrel still glow (see René Pommier's *René Barthes, ras le bol*, 1987, based on his 1986 doctoral thesis), it might be instructive for a strictly anglophone audience to have all of the pertinent documents at its disposal before arriving at specific conclusions.

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We apologize for the omission of full publication details of L. Davis and R. Huttenbach's *Mannism and the Pursuit of Empire: The political economy of British imperialism*, which was reviewed by P. K. O'Brien in last week's TLS. The book contains 406 pages and is published by Cambridge University Press at £20.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

James Kirkup: letters, reminiscences, photographs, etc; for a biography.

Akiko Takemoto.
1347 Hiramachi, Zeotouji, Kagawa, Japan.

Edward Malynex (1891–1974), dress-designer; personal reminiscences, photographs or sketches of his designs, or actual clothes; for a biography.

Peter Hope Lumley.
84 Kensington High Street, London W8 4SG.

Princess Katherine Dashkova (1743–1810); any relevant material, other than that in available biographies; for a new biography.

Guy Daniels.
c/o James Edmonstone, 1 St Peter's Close, Lugwardine, Hereford HR1 4AT.

Alexander Allan Shand (1844–1930), Head Office Manager, Parr's Bank, and advisor in early Meiji Japan, 1870s; papers and information about descendants.

Olive Checkland.
18 Ferry Path, Cambridge CB4 1HB.

Margaret Llewelyn-Davies: personal recollections, diaries, letters, pamphlets, speeches, etc; for a biography commissioned to celebrate the centenary of her General Secretaryship of the Co-Operative Women's Guild.

Diane Paskin.
Co-Operative Women's Guild, 342 Hoe Street, London EC1A 3DF.

Brian Penion, editor of the Sydney Daily Telegraph during the 1940s; personal recol-

lections or information about his activities in Britain; for a biography.

Patrick Buckridge.
Australian Studies Centre, 28 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DS.

Donald Attwater, journalist, who contributed to such papers as *Communist* and *Blackfriars* in the 1930s and 40s; personal papers, recollections, articles, etc.

Jay P. Corrin.
College of Basic Studies, Boston University, 871 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215, USA.

Bernard Stevens: any information or material, including MSS, for a collection of biographical and critical essays on Stevens's life and work.

Bertha Stevens.
Bernard Stevens Trust, The Forge, Great Maplestead, Halesowen, Essex CO9 2RE.

Christoph Friedrich von Pfleiderer (1736–1821), mathematician: letters, reminiscences; for a biography.

Wilfried Lagler.
Falkenstrasse 33, D-7406 Moessingen 5, German Federal Republic.

George Gissing: any letters, in institutions or in private hands; for an edition of the complete letters.

Paul F. Mathiesen.
SUNY-Binghamton, New York 13901, USA.

Arthur C. Young.
Russell Sage College, Troy, New York 12180, USA.

COMMENTARY

Farcically final

R. V. Holdsworth

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE
The Jew of Malta
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

The quarto of *The Jew of Malta* titles itself a "Famously Tragedy", and the Prologue promises "the tragedy of a Jew". Apart from the fact that several characters, and finally the protagonist, die, the play that follows hardly fits this billing. True, Barabas the Jew has the hubris to deem himself "born to better chance / And framed of finer mould than common men", and the egotism to declare "so [live, perish may all the world]"; but his goal is not global conquest or divine knowledge but money, coupled with a desire to get even with those who take it from him. Nor does his career permit one to talk of overreaching ambition, moral deterioration, and an inevitable fall. He is gleefully unprincipled from the start, and the plot he keeps in motion is little more than a medley of practical jokes with lethal consequences for his victims, the last victim being, quite arbitrarily, himself. Two melodramatic to elicit terror, the play also studiously undercuts anything suggestive of pity. "Witness that I die a Christian", gasps the innocent Abigail as she succumbs to the poisoned purgative her father has drugged to the nunnery. "Ay, and a virgin too, that grieves me most", her confessor glumly adds.

Such features led T.S. Eliot furiously to reclassify *The Jew of Malta* as a farce, albeit one possessing "terribly serious, even savage comic humour", and Barry Kyle's Swan production seems so bent on implementing this dictum that the seriousness and savagery are only fitfully apparent. A headlong pace and plenty of slapstick keep both psychology and much sense of real pain at bay, while Alun Armstrong's Barabas, rushing delightedly from one bravura

performance to the next, and keeping the audience on his side by means of constant asides and winks, risks condemnation more for overacting than malevolence. A breezy jokiness dissipates the moments of potential horror. Bernadine, yanked from his bed by a long rope looped round his neck and strangled slowly by Barabas and Ithamore, dies to the strains of a jaunty jazz tune, and Jacobino's cry on discovering the impact of Barabas's porridge, "O brother, all the nuns are dead! Let's bury them", becomes the evening's funniest line.

Armstrong's manic prankster works well in this Orton-like atmosphere (a parallel for which a programme note prepares us), and Phil Daniels's filthy but low-key Ithamore enhances his predominance. Quite different effects, however, designed to highlight the play's concern with religious antagonism and political craft, are striven for elsewhere. At times the Christian Knights wear robes reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan; at others they don khaki battle-dress while the Turks have Arab headgear and kalashnikovs, implying a setting in modern Beirut. Neither link seems revelatory, and to attempt both is confusing. A more successful strategy is adopted in the Prologue and finale. For the opening, Machiavelli rises from a fiery pit through a trap in the world to loiter over the audience on a trapeze, fixing them with a predatory smile as he delivers his lecture on the morality of politics. At the end Barabas is lowered, screaming for pity, into the same hell's mouth, after which Ferneze the Christian Governor stands on the edge bathed in its glow while Chuliyuth's Turks are huddled to the back of the stage and slint. Removing his wig, Ferneze reveals himself as the Machiavelli of the Prologue, reverting to the latter's menacing Italian tones as he gives his closing cynical thanks to heaven. These are the production's most disturbing moments, but they seem starkly out of touch with the farcical scamper of the intrigue they frame.

A vernacular voice

Helen McNeil

Onalibus: A Writer's Beginnings
BBC2

When Eudora Welty wrote *One Writer's Beginnings* (1984) the title was chosen with her usual attention to detail. It was the origin of this writer that concerned her, this Jackson, Mississippi writer who happened to be a woman, and whose works are deeply rooted in place, voice and the play of time. This writer, the daughter of a family of Swiss descent who had moved further south from Virginia, came to consciousness learning chronology from the ticking of a grandfather clock and intoning concord from the morning duet of her parents' whistling and humming downstairs. Like Nabokov, Welty has a full and avocative memory. Unlike Nabokov – and unlike her fellow Mississippian Faulkner – she sees memory as an instrument of continuity and "confluence". In the recent *Onalibus* tribute, no script-writer was credited; the woman interviewer whose voice asked very politely whether clock time would necessarily be the appropriate model for narrative time also remained anonymous. Although Nigel Williams was the producer most concerned with the project, Welty herself was the author (in *One Writer's Beginnings*) of the meditations on craft and memory which formed the core of the programme. Elsewhere, there was little offered.

Time and tale-telling are Welty's main concerns, as she showed by telling stories about both. Once, when a host was afraid she was going to be too literary, he asked her to "just tell us one of your stories in your own words"; Welty reported that this was a high compliment indeed, since all her stories are already told in her own words. She offered with some relish a possibly apocryphal local saying: "If you hear it, tell it." Even in a staged get-together with burlesque-tipping Jackson Indians, her sense of comic timing came through; we seemed to be hearing the first draft of the still-unwritten

"Why Is There an Owl In My Refrigerator?" *Onalibus* wisely let Welty speak and recite; the surgically incisive interview is inappropriate for a seventy-eight-year-old writer. However, the programme failed in its larger assignment of informing its viewers why this woman's views matter. Welty is one of the century's great short-story writers; she is a riveting narrator and chronicler of the universal in the local; her work is humane and her vision is deeply comic. None of this was evident in the *Onalibus* programme, which chose instead to validate her status by showing her receiving a National Medal of Honor at the White House in 1984. She was happy to be appreciated and Nancy Reagan read the citation nicely (stumbling only on the phrase "Pulitzer Prize"), but this was the programme's only effort to identify Welty's place in American culture.

It was impossible to tell which absences represented part of *Onalibus*'s portrait and which might have been due to neglect, or lack of time in Jackson, or the decision to use Welty's own voice for the voice-overs. The programme had relatively few images: the camera lingered on artful tableaux such as a barometer, on empty bourbon bottle, and a book of Jackson recipes, all of which must have been set up on site. Of Jackson we saw only the library, named after Welty, her father's skyscraper, and a brief view from a train, while the interior of her house was carefully exploited in beautiful near-monochrome. Welty lives to this day in her parents' house, a fine clapboard home with the porch and the central turning staircase familiar from American cinematic representations of idyllic small-town life. This house is her immediate setting, but its predominance in the film strongly implied that she is an introverted, interior writer, which she is not. On the basis of this programme one could believe Welty's remark that she "came from a sheltered life". It was not so easy to understand why, like Emily Dickinson, she also knows – and emphasizes – that "a sheltered life can be a daring life as well".

Avuncular attitudes

Patricia Craig

The Magic Toyshop
Various cinemas

Angela Carter's novel *The Magic Toyshop* is almost a children's story; there are a touch of Noel Streatfeild and a touch of John Masefield about it. Three children, suddenly orphaned, are sent to live with a disagreeable uncle, a toymaker, above his South London shop: Melanie, Jonathan and Victoria. Melanie is fifteen, and the story concerns her growing up. The book is plentiful in symbolic effects. Melanie (Caroline Milroe), not yet bereft of parents and security, succumbs to an adolescent impulse flitting about a moonlit garden wearing her mother's wedding dress, which ends up torn and bloodstained. Quite a few implications may be read into this. Fairytale imagery, a lucid prose style, and full acknowledgement of an erotic undertow to the storybook incidents: these make for a highly charged narrative.

David Whentley's film sticks pretty closely to the events of the novel, but adds a surreal embellishment at every turn: a wedding photograph suddenly springs to life; a rose on a rosebush becomes a fragment of wallpaper; a flesh-and-blood terrier fuses with a picture of itself. The tiresome *Company of Wolves* all over again? Fortunately less elaboration is required for this particular story, and the overpowering distortions don't run not all over the screen, as they did in the previous adaptation.

The film sets out to illuminate, as decoratively and poignantly as possible, the concept of growing up. To grow up is to shed the accoutrements of childhood: parents, playthings, heated towels supplied on demand, an

easy life. The toyshop owned by churchish Uncle Philip (Tom Bell) is a kind of metaphorical halfway house for Melanie, full of intimations of oddities and enormities to come. It contains, among the rest of the curiosities, a strange Irish trio: red-haired, dumb Aunt Margaret, Uncle Philip's wife, and her brothers Francis and Finn. These three have the children's good at heart, unlike the wicked uncle, the puppet-maker, whose apparent generosity to the orphans has strings attached.

Readers of Carter's fiction will be familiar with the "wolf's clothing" device, which is used to represent the carnal drive in men – something that turns out not to be as fearsome as it might look to the uninitiated. Here, it isn't a wolf but a swan that fits the bill: a peculiar looking object contrived by Uncle Philip to seduce the part of Jove to Melanie's Leda; or Finn himself, as it may be, who stands in for the swan-puppet during rehearsals. (Another swan connection, one that isn't stressed, is the likeness of the Irish siblings to the legendary Children of Lir: a sister and two brothers turned into swans and rendered voiceless.) Graceful Finn embodies a few of the facts that Melanie, in order to grow up, has got to face: that men, as likely as not, will give off "a ferocious, unwashed, animal reek" and come at you with their discoloured teeth; and that such delects, ultimately, are of no account.

The substitution of visual images for an ironic narrative voice means that Melanie's posing in attitudes, for example, is just posing in attitudes accompanied by portentous music. The film is most effective when it is sedate or naturalistic; an undue theatricality keeps threatening to take it over. Expert acting, however, combined with the potent associations Angela Carter puts into her stories, keeps *The Magic Toyshop* from running off the rails.

Collective collapse

J. K. L. Walker

RAY HERMAN
They Shoot Horses, Don't They?
Mermaid Theatre

The marathon dance craze that swept America during the interwar years has taken its place, along with Lindbergh, Prohibition, Al Capone, the Wall Street Crash, in the popular, showbiz-style history of the period: the past as excess of one kind or another – in this case, genteel Roseland Saturday-night pleasures transmuted into a grim parody in which couples danced until they dropped. Those that didn't drop won – esteem, or job satisfaction, or trophies, or, as the Depression bit, cash and food and shelter for as many weeks or months as the contests dragged on.

Ray Herman's adaptation opens out Horace McCoy's 1935 novel which, in Ron Daniels's dazzlingly inventive production for the RSC – as in Sydney Pollack's film of 1969 – becomes a metaphor and indictment of the America of the Depression years.

From the start (and even before, with the bustle of costumed players in the foyers), the audience is sucked into an ambivalent role by Ralph Koltai's stunningly theatrical conversion of the Mermaid into a Californian pier-head dance-hall. Koltai's illusionism – the railed-off dance-floor/stage, the hundreds of twinkling bulbs framing the flag and, bunting, swathed balconies, the giant blow-ups of film stars – makes spectators of us all, settling down to watch the plucky young couples battling it out for the \$1000 prize. Collision only slowly gives way to detachment, as the dinner-jacketed MC, Rocky Gravo (in a commanding performance by Henry Goodman), flogs the sluttish couples on with boosterist exhortation while his assistant roller-skates round herding the dancers like a tyrannical sheep-dog.

Despite the banner proclaiming that "they're dancing continuously until they finish", they aren't, of course, and in the rest intervals the play moves away from mere spectacle to acquire definition as couples become people rather than mere figures on numbers. Not that reality gets all that much of a look in,

this being 1930s Los Angeles; fantasies of Hollywood stardom engulf these down-and-outs, working their passage from dust-bowl farms or worse, through this dance-hall purgatory, to the golden studio gates. Couple 122, Gloria (Imelda Staunton) and Robert (Paul Greengrass), provides the strongest of the narrative threads and the play's theme of illusion collapsing into despair. The girl's constructive suicide at her partner's hands – "Shoot me, I won't feel nothing, it's the only way to get me out of my misery" – is set against the one-time farm-boy's memory of his grief as a child when the old, long-enduring work-horse had to be shot.

Obvious, even crude, though the analogy may be, it is powerful and effective within the social context of the play and of the era before the New Deal had begun to dispel the sense of deep wrong in American society. Yet despair cuts across the grain of American optimism, the historic belief in salvation through works. Here, as the production moves forward, with the exhausted dancers being subjected to yet more bizarre humiliations, that optimism is introduced in jagged, ironic counterpoint. Popular songs, cleverly assembled by Adam Pollock from Hollywood musicals of the 1930s, are gasped or strutted out by contestants for a five or ten-dollar bonus, their title but not representative hopefulness pulled mercilessly inside out: the 1930s not being prepared to allow the 1930s to keep their sunny side up and wrap their troubles in dreams. More cruelly, the glare of frontier folkiness, the sustaining, if decadent American pragmatism, turns menacing and its exponent, the only less but energizing Gravo, dictatorial, Mephistophelean. This is a collectivist view which happens to work extremely well using a third-rate dance-hall populated by automata.

Meanwhile, down on the realistic level, the play is falling apart by the end of the second act into a welter of Mothers' League intervention, escaped convicts and shots from the balcony: the marathon collapses after 1,246 hours. This is a disappointment both to spectators and to the play. Narrative logic, it might be said, is resolved in the shooting of Gloria by the end; but their thin pure dust-heap of a production, the collective drama and spectacle that comes to seem almost subsidiary to it.

A route to the sublime

Malcolm Bowie

JEAN GENET
The Balcony
Barbican Theatre

Madame Irma's brothel, the Great Balcony, specializes in "special services". For an appropriate fee, trained personnel will turn the meek into generals, the hesitant into judges and the impious into bishops. Not all the figures of authority have, however, the same erotic charge. When the last tableau of Genet's play begins, no client has asked to take his pleasure as Chief of Police. Georges, the "real" Chief of Police, exasperated to find that the constabulary is discriminated against in the fantasy-life of the population, proposes an extreme solution: to have himself enshrined in a man-sized phallus. "Very difficult to bring off", the Judge comments, at one of those rare points where the translation outsmarts Genet's original text ("très difficile à réaliser"). But this desperate vision of priapic potency is soon to make way for a truer glory: Georges is about to enter his first initiator and a new god is about to enter the savage pantheon of Western sexuality. For the boys in blue an overdue millennium has at last arrived.

It is customary to see this final tableau as Genet's grand satirical vengeance on the forces of law and order that had hounded him during adolescence and early manhood. In the wake of a successful insurrection, the brothel numbers have been called to high office as the "real" General, Bishop and Judge of the new social order and they are indignant to find that the pleasures of pretence are now in danger of being withdrawn. Yet they are not easily tamed by their new duties and dignities. Leaving behind the mere overacting that is this play's home key, the three of them join forces with the newly crowned Queen Irma and enter the wondrous dimension of hyper-acting. This is indeed satire. In Genet's hands, the public behaviour of "the authorities" has suddenly become transparent and their private worlds of desire and power-appetite have been laid bare. Those who come to Irma's "house of illusions"

straight from the televised performances of Fawn Hall and Oliver North will know exactly where they are. But precisely because *The Balcony* works so well as satire, it still bites so deep into the contemporary social and political scene, the Jean Genet story can do little to enhance or explain it. The main elements of that story – orphanage, theft, borstal, more theft, prison, prostitution, writing, canonization by Sartre – have their own bleak power and can be reassembled in a variety of ways, but in none of their configurations to date do they have anything to say about the abounding complexity and finesse of Genet's play.

Genet's text sings and dances in the frontier territory between truth and falsehood, and between cruelty and tenderness. In the thick of battle, Roger and Chantal imagine themselves a future love; in the thick of prostitutional commerce, Irma and Georges share the memory of a love now lost; the phoney General, exciting himself with memories of wars unfought becomes suddenly solicitous towards the troops he never had: "I was an gentle that I started to snow. To snow upon my men, to mire them in the tenderest of shrouds . . ."; and the phoney Bishop, whose hands are up to things beneath his vestments, discovers his own route towards universal joy:

Oh glided core . . . beneath your wretched, frozen skin, what are my hands doing? Unsuspected for anything other than the merest sketch of a fluttering motion, they have become wing-stumps – the wings not of angels but of guinea-fowl – oh rigid core, you enable me to pursue, in warmth and in darkness, the tenderness, the most radiant sweetness.

This pervasive tone of lyrical exaltation seems at first hearing to be at odds with the stupidity, brutishness and abjection of the characters – to have been wished upon them by a writer impatient to prove himself no brute. But Genet's countless stage directions concerning tone of voice make it clear that this lyricism is to have its part in the drama: it is one manipulative play among many others in the endless game of sex and power, but it is also the token of a gratuitous grace, a providential entitlement to ecstasy, that descends with splendid indifference upon predator and prey, law-breaker and law-enforcer, prostitute and

client. One has to go back to Proust, or to *The Dunciad*, to find satire in which the desire to revile and the desire to celebrate are so closely entwined.

This is a bravura company performance of the most exhilarating sort, in which the galumphing choreography of the brothel visitors (in stills (Genet insists on stills) is handled with breathtaking ease, and in which the escalating madness of the plot is timed to perfection. Among many fine individual performances, Joe Melia's Police Chief moves back and forth across a range of favourite English cameos: from Dixon, through Z-Cars to Anderson, all with nice touches of under-the-surface spiv; Richard Easton's Envoy, maddly keeping his head while all around him are losing theirs, maintains exactly the "ton casse-couilles" that Genet prescribes for him; and with extraordinary precision and unrelenting, Dilys Laye as Irma and Kathryn Pogson as Carmen act the part of actresses meditating on the art of acting – as if theatres and brothels had never had other business to transact.

But despite all this, it seems to me that too much effort has been spent in preparing broad scenic effects and in maintaining an overall carnivalesque momentum. Genet had a good deal to say about the movement of the play in performance, and he particularly stressed the qualities of "song" and "equivocation" in its language. Even without Genet's guidance on such matters, however, one could have wished that his glittering text – well translated by Barbara Wright and Terry Hands – had been allowed to sing more, to absorb into itself some at least of the energy that is at present grudgingly discharged in stage action. The lyrical passages – with their enumerative rhythms and their recurrent images of ornament, interlaced and celestial motion – are an intermittent hymn to Genet's twin idols, reflection and simulation. These passages are not individual display-pieces, but moments within an increasingly

powerful choric declamation: the characters need to be heard answering each other swoon for swoon and echoing each other from one stark intimation to the next. For just as the characters have equal access to bliss, they are equally threatened by death from start to finish. Talk of death – of the absence that all too palpably lies beyond their histrionic frenzy – is a collective enterprise, and the play's final vision of mortality has been prepared from its opening speech. There the Bishop had imagined himself dying upon an after-image of meaninglessly intricate ecclesiastical garb, and, after many reminders on the way, this same intricate intricacy emerges at the end as the structural principle on which the supreme mausoleum is to be built: "the inside will have the complexity of a termite's nest or the basilica at Lourdes . . . already tombs are being encoined in tombs, cenotaphs in cenotaphs, coffins in coffins".

More could have been done, then, to foster the participatory song of Genet's play and its interweaving of slapstick and sublimity. In one scene, however, more could not have been done: from all viewpoints, it is already a triumph. This is the scene, in the closing minutes of the play, where the destinies of rebel leader and Police Chief converge. Gerard Murphy as Roger staggered on to the stage in the futuristic divinity of the Force: he wears the regulation stills and looms over the auditorium as a lane-covered, punkish, easy-riding cycle-cap. And from some indeterminate point behind the glitzy pulchre of his face a terrifying police-siren song begins to sound. We have already had a forerunner of this voice in Roger's *pur et dur* ranting as rebel leader. But now, as the voice discovers brutality, it discovers paths too. Play on us, the whole production says at this point, not just for calling this monster into being but for stranding him a yard above the ground and for freezing his voice into this forlorn wail.

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223pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$25.
0882337963

STANLEY RABINOWITZ (Editor)
The Noise of Change: Russian literature and
the critics 1891-1917
247pp. Ann Arbor: Ardis. \$25.
0882335251

Perhaps the most exciting and interesting period of Russian culture is the so-called "Silver Age", the quarter-century that preceded the October Revolution of 1917. During this period the arts – not only literature, but also painting, music and drama – flourished in a new and original way, and the background of a crumbling society, shaken by – to use an image of Aleksandr Blok's – seismic tremors such as the Russo-Japanese War, the 1905 Revolution and the First World War. Of the contemporary literary currents the most important was Symbolism, which, beginning as a joke in the 1890s, had become dominant by 1905, only to collapse into itself five years later as its leading representatives – Vyacheslav Ivanov, Valery Bryusov, Andrei Bely and Blok – fought an ideological battle with one another in the pages of the magazine *Apollon*.

The period was also one of a booming economy, with vast fortunes being made by merchant families, some of whom became munificent patrons of the arts. Pavel Tret'yakov, for example, a textile magnate, whose collection of Russian art formed the nucleus of the present Tret'yakov gallery; or Sergey Shchukin, who owned and exhibited to the public what was perhaps the best collection of modern French art in Europe; or Savva Mamontov, whose fortune came from railways and steel, and who turned his country estate at Abramsevo into an artists' colony and established a private opera company in Moscow. Less well known were the Ryabushinsky brothers, who were in banking, cotton and paper. The fourth brother, Nikolay, described as "a Muscovite Petronius", was an aesthete, with ambitions as a painter and poet. At the beginning of 1906 he brought out in Moscow the first number of a new Symbolist artistic and literary journal, *Zolotoe Runo* (The Golden Fleece), celebrating the occasion with what Bryusov described as "an orgiastic festival". A manifesto on the first pages of the opening number set out its position:

Art is eternal, since it is founded on the Imperishable, on that which cannot be denied.
Art is indivisible, since it has one source alone – the spirit.
Art is symbolic, since it bears within itself the symbol – the reflection of the Eternal in the temporal.
Art is free, since it is formed by the free, creative impulse.

Zolotoe Runo was a luxurious production in large format, with a facing translation into French of all the text – an innovation which only lasted six months, though the magazine itself continued to appear until the end of 1909. The journal's main achievement in the four years of its existence was undoubtedly its treatment of art, in which it took over the role earlier played by the now defunct *Mir Iskusstva* (The World of Art). Ryabushinsky commissioned portraits of the leading Symbolist writers from some of the best-known contemporary artists: Vrubel's portrait of Bryusov, one of his last works, appeared in the magazine's first number together with reproductions of other works by the artist. Serov was engaged to paint the poet Konstantin Balmont, Bakst to paint Andrei Bely, and Somov to do Vyacheslav Ivanov. But the magazine did not confine itself to Russian artists: as the frontpiece of William Richardson's book, a reproduction of the

January 1909 contents page, shows, this issue was devoted to Gauguin, with illustrations of the artist's work and articles on it. *Zolotoe Runo* also put on a number of art exhibitions: in 1907 it sponsored a show staged by the *Golubynaya roza* (Blue Rose) group of Russian Symbolist artists, and in 1908 and 1909 mounted three "Salons Zolotoe Runo", which displayed modern French as well as modern Russian art, and which enjoyed immense success.

On the literary side, however, the magazine was not so successful. Although the leading Symbolists were very willing to accept Ryabushinsky's generous remuneration for their poems, stories and dramas, they never considered the magazine to have a voice of its own, or viewed it as a serious proponent of Symbolist thought. This role had already been pre-empted in St Petersburg by Merezhkovsky's *Novy Put'*, and in Moscow by Bryusov's *Vesy*. And when *Zolotoe Runo* appeared, very little time in putting the book severely into the new comer with two hostile articles signed "Comrade German" (William Richardson attributes both to the poet and critic Zinida Gippius; in fact the second was by Bryusov), and repeating the gesture at intervals during the next few years. Although *Zolotoe Runo* defended itself hotly, it remained at a disadvantage in so far as Ryabushinsky was unable to find a writer of any stature to edit the literary section, but had to rely on a series of mediocrities: Sergey Sokolov, Aleksandr Kurinsky and Georgy Chulkov. The journal's importance in the history of Symbolist thought, therefore, is not large.

Professor Richardson's account in *Zolotoe Runo* and *Russian Modernism: 1905-1910* is sensible and workmanlike; but it is, like *Zolotoe Runo* itself, much stronger on the artistic than on the literary side. His generalizations, outside the narrow ambit of his period, can be dubious, as when he associates "decadence" with "the first works of Merezhkovsky, Bryusov and Balmont in the 1890s". Though this is true of Bryusov, it is hardly so of Balmont, and could scarcely be less correct of

Merezhkovsky. The author uses an unreliable and out-of-date work on Bely and the Symbolists – Maslennikov's *The Frenzied Poets* (1952) – as a primary source, and gives far too much credence to Bely's highly untrustworthy memoirs. And it is more than a pity that, in converting his thesis into a book, he did not take the trouble to compile an index; without one it is almost useless to his fellow researchers in the field.

The Symbolists, by and large, were fascinated by the theatre: not only did they write voluminously about it but many also tried their hand at works for the stage. Michael Green's interesting anthology *The Russian Symbolist Theatre* illustrates well both their theory and their practice. He has cast his net widely, including not only genuine Symbolists such as Bryusov, Blok, Ivanov, Bely and Fedor Solov'yev, but also figures more peripheral to the movement: Mikhail Kuzmin, represented by two charming, brilliantly translated trifles, *The Comedy of Alexis*, *Man of God* and *The Venetian Madcap*; Innokenty Annanyan and his "Bacchic drama" *Thomyris Kikharodos*, which takes its subject from Sophocles; Aleksey Remizov and the characteristically odd *The Tragedy of Judas*, *Prince of Iscariot* based on an apocryphal tale, with hints of a medieval mystery play; and Leonid Andreev who, though the only recognized and successful playwright, does not merit a play, but only four short articles.

In his introduction Professor Green writes: "the plays of the Symbolists were not, at their best, works intended, like the dramatic poems of the Romantics, for the study rather than the stage: they were highly theatrical creations in a new style that demanded a new style of production." The comment is justified (though Symbolist dramatic poems do exist), but it should be added that, whatever style of production might be adopted, it is hard to see how almost any Symbolist drama could work on the stage. The author wisely refrains from giving us examples of plays by Bryusov, Ivanov or Bely; he remarks on Blok's "deep-seated doubt" as to

the theatrical viability of his *The Rose and the Cross*, notes that Solov'yev's dramatic work does not reach the level of his best fiction and poetry, and, while claiming Annanyan's tragedies to be "the most impressive achievement of the Russian Symbolist drama", adds, in something of a meiosis, that they "are likely to remain limited in their appeal". The plays and articles Green has chosen are of great interest: but only, or almost only, within the context of the Symbolist movement or the work of a given writer.

This applies with even greater force to the articles collected in the anthologies edited by Ronald E. Peterson and by Stanley Richardson. Peterson's *The Russian Symbolists* is a well-chosen collection which begins with Merezhkovsky's famous article of 1892: "On the Reasons for the Decline, and the New Currents, in Contemporary Russian Literature", continues with Bryusov's prefaces to his two anthologies, *Russkie Simvolisty*, and concludes with the 1910 argument between Ivanov, Blok, Bryusov and Bely. It admirably illustrates the various strands of Symbolist thought. Richardson, in *The Noise of Change: Russian Literature and the Critics*, has collected and translated two articles by contemporary critics, and with a different critical methodology, a thomas ranging from Gorky's work to Bely's novel *Petersburg*. Again, however, nothing seems to have intrinsic value, with the exception, perhaps, of a piece by M.P. Nedomsky on Chekhov.

These books indicate a very welcome increase of interest in Russian Symbolism; the is, however, something slightly odd about the manifestation: at whom are all these translations of what are, it must be admitted, rather arcane texts aimed? Those specialist must be original, while other readers are likely to be bogged down in detail, or to find it impossible to separate the seminal from the superficial. What is needed above all at the present time is more unrefined primary material, but as a representative, synoptic treatment of the Symbolist movement as a whole.

The something less of a naked soul

Lesley Chamberlain

ELAINE FEINSTEIN
A Captive Lion: The life of Marina Tsvetayeva
289pp. Hutchinson. £15.95.
0091659000
MARINA TSVETAYEVA
Selected Poems
Translated by Elaine Feinstein
108pp. Hutchinson. £6.95.
0091659310

Marina Tsvetayeva's life was not marked by kindness in any direction. She met the demands of a harsh fate with extraordinary stamina and courage but she was fatally fierce and exacting in her dealings with others. Admitting of herself "I have not learned to be loved", she foreshadows one possible reaction of many readers to the personality which emerges from Elaine Feinstein's scrupulously balanced life.

Tsvetayeva's mother visited musical ambitions on her to the point of cruelty, decided her poems and preferred her milder, prettier younger sister. Neither mother nor father were gregarious, so Marina had little practice in society: she grew up isolated and unsure of her feminine appeal, with the habit of almost exclusive self-appraisal. Meanwhile, comfortable family circumstances never encouraged her to be practical. She emerged into adulthood wholly dependent on her poetry for her self-esteem. Feinstein, struck on first acquaintance by "two extraordinary weaknesses of her self-exposure" in the poetry, succeeds in presenting this intense life as Tsvetayeva probably saw it. It is just and generous approach and far feeling for her subject only deserts her over Marina's besotted devotion to her shallow, ill-mannered son, Georgy.

While still a teenager, Marina married an even younger man, Sergei Efron. His having fought with the White Army meant that after the Revolution they lived most of their life

together in exile. Efron, physically and psychologically weak, gave his wife some support in nearly twenty years of hand-to-mouth existence (mainly in Prague and Paris), and their marriage survived illness and long separations. But spiritually it was never close and family life suffered. Sergei felt alienated and distanced by Marina's passions on and off the page, while their daughter Alya, ardently nurtured by Marina as a source of company, was later carelessly discarded in favour of Georgy.

The passions were mountainous. Tsvetayeva plunged unguardedly into many short, ecstatic affairs with men and women and became involved by correspondence with people whom she never met. Love for her meant inspiration and temporary fulfilment of a craving to be needed. It is not obvious that it included a feeling of warmth – the recipients felt engulfed and sometimes dismayed. Rilke on his death bed, receiving a letter from a woman he knew only on a page printed with a foreign language, encountered a forwardness of soul bordering on insanity: "Rainer, I want to come to you. Don't be angry, after all it's me, but I want to sleep with you. Simply to fall asleep and to sleep. . . . And nothing further." Tsvetayeva never ran out of energy. She was immensely saddened by the ending – after three months – of an affair with the only man ever to satisfy her physically, Ivan Rodzavich, and the intensity translated itself into some of her finest work: "The Mountain" and "Poem of the End".

Tsvetayeva's "naked soul", as Pasternak called it, brought poor returns to the pocket. At the nadir of her poverty in Paris, when her husband was sick and she had two children to feed, her sole earnings, from poetry readings, were scant. Though a better life did not lie within easy reach, she could have published more in the émigré press and enlisted more personal support. She was, however, uncompromising, guileless and politically oblivious. Unfairly, she was accused of this or that political sympathy but in the real world she desperately lacked tact.

Tsvetayeva was physically strong and did not

menace at the edges of his eyes his mouth tight shut strangely too low is the bow he makes tonight

on time? that false note in his voice, what is it the brain alerts to and the heart drops at?

The task of empathizing with Tsvetayeva pressures to a degree where one would rewrite themselves in English to bring a personal sadness to the page. It is well that she has not allowed this to happen in *A Captive Lion*, for it is

Local destinies

Jenny Penberthy

URSULA BETHELL
Collected Poems
Edited by Vincent O'Sullivan
110pp. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
£9.95.

ROBIN HYDE
Selected Poems
Edited by Lydia Wevers
106pp. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
£10.50.

ALLEN CURNOW
The Loop in Lone Kauri Raad: Poems 1983-1985
38pp. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
£4.95.

HUGH LAUDER
Over the White Wall: Poems
56pp. Caxton Press, P.O. Box 25-088,
Christchurch, New Zealand. \$9.95.
0906853108

ELIZABETH SMITHER
Professor Musgrove's Canary
61pp. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
£6.95.
0196480523
LAURIS EDMOND
Seasons and Creatures
56pp. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe. £4.95.
0906429242

The works of Ursula Bethell (1874-1945) and Robin Hyde (1906-1939) are now back in print. There is growing interest in post-colonial New Zealand's cultural starting-points. How does the local trounce the imported? Where does the indigenous stir a sense of belonging rather than a flair for exotic sentimentality? When did the literature acclimatize? The poems of both women offer some answers: both felt real loyalty to England, but New Zealand unlocked their literary talents.

Although Ursula Bethell's *Collected Poems* includes the first appearance of her unedited and technically venturesome autobiographical sequence, "By the River Ashby", her serious work – the bulk of the volume – is also her least interesting. Its earnest intentions find expression in deference to Victorian and Georgian models. Behind the polysyllabic decorum, one hears an occasional impatience with literary formulas:

There shall be no insistence upon symbolism;
let each eye take the tokens, heart interpret,
individual tongue make fit respond.

From a Garden in the Antipodes, Bethell's earliest and most successful collection, is witty and modest. The poems are an almanac of climatic idiosyncrasies, of "Plants, Pests, Postman and Passers-by", of successes and failures, of obstacles to growth – "a large Porsian cat", "rain-tornadoes", hailstones and insect swarms. Together, they represent a clearing space, the ardent, arduous cultivation of a piece of New Zealand. They experiment both horticulturally and verbally.

Hyde's *Selected Poems* is a structure of excessive plainness, springs from a dry bank in the back garden, is made of corrugated iron, painted all over with brick-red.

Hyde: I have planted a green Bay-tree,
A sweet Bay, an Olive, and a Turkey fig,
A Fig, an Olive, and a Bay.

challenge to her green-fingered ingenuity and a challenge to adorn bare, unsexed places. "New Zealand wasn't truly discovered," wrote a contemporary, "until Ursula Bethell, 'very earnestly digging', raised her head to look at the mountains. Almost everyone had been blind before." Hyde's *Selected Poems* are similarly unadorned, more authentic, local work. It took years of apprenticeship to English literature before she was able to relocate her voice. (Dorothy's lifetime, who is graded by local critics for clairvoyant visions of the England she had not seen – visited it only once, shortly before her death.) Gradually New Zealand becomes her own perhaps to give it configurations it didn't have before. "Geography", Koch tells us, "is the great hidden shaper of history and character", and he is extraordinarily good at evoking

she finds, is shaped into its own mythopoetic contours:

Strung on pale wires, close to the sea,
Our great rocks floated like whales,
We loved the dark coal-hauls, did not despise them.
Money was nothing, balloons were much,
the grey mists quick-breasted as doves.
I knew a green place where the light looked more like trees,
Trees more like diffused and silly light . . .

In this more palpable context, the passionate, brooding force of her work drops its portentousness.

The autobiographical trilogy, "Houses by the Sea" (a companion piece to her equally fine novel, *The Godwin's Fly*), reconstructs her Wellington childhood. The poem's several parts alternate restlessly between tight rhymed forms and languorous blank verse: nervous fluctuations that trace the shadowy urgencies of her voice and vision. Tighter stanzaic patterns are no lapse into old habits; they are integral to her irony, her lyricism, and her summoning of memories.

In the remaining four volumes under review, all written comparatively recently, one finds, still, a tension between world and local culture. But in these the poetry is unabashedly intrigued by the cross-currents. Allen Curnow's small ten-poem collection *The Loop in Lone Kauri Road* takes an exquisitely judged vantage point. Curnow's readers – he's in his sixth decade of writing – will be familiar with his uneasy occupancy of place: "Heart torn? The rape of the northern bush left plenty for pulpits and pews."

The precise geographical co-ordinates of the poems by no means constrain their mental journeying. "On the Road to Erewhon" is about the septuagenarian poet's visit to the Mesopotamia region on the South Island where he grew up and where, in the early 1860s, Samuel Butler made his sheepfarm. Following in the steps of the Briton (the poem quotes from Butler's work) the journey questions the already tenuous continuities between past and present: "Where you came from is where you're going" writes Curnow in the riddling, looking-glass logic of the poem.

He alludes to a broader scale of destinies too. In "Gare SNCF Garavan", "the baze / is international"; in "Lo These Are Parts of His Ways", the poet challenges God to a chess game where "mutually assured / destruction keeps both of us guessing"; on the Italian Riviera of "Don't Touch the Exhibits", "A brace of NATO frigates present / unmuzzled

guns, 'optional extras'. Destination doomsday. Lange's New Zealand is not exempt.

Allen Curnow's adroit representations of reality are at the same time sceptical about language and mimesis. The seeing eye, we are reminded, is always the "mind's eye", and the viewer is often in "two minds": "Where you're going's never what you see / and what you saw, is that where you went?" Blindness, bafflement, cryptic echoes, the search for signs, are all features of poems that are themselves wily, semiotic tricksters. They are wonderful poems: taut, sinewy, superbly controlled; they read, remarkably, with the easy momentum of speech.

Over the *White Wall* is a collection of short poems and prose pieces largely about exile, about unbudging habits, loyalties, and loathings. Hugh Lauder, cosmopolitan immigrant to New Zealand in 1978, is appalled by local complacencies:

They have their sirens
and their dawn patrols
discreetly parcelled
their guilt planted in flower-boxes.

The purported observer is an exiled Ulster-woman. Lauder shares, I suspect, her distrust of "these Southern loyalists". The best of his poems are a subtle overlay of place and period. The Italian car-wrecker in "Smash Palace" works his trade on ground that has seen the mutilation of early Christians and of Mussolini's prisoners. The title, borrowed from Roger Donaldson's film, makes quick allusion to New Zealand's own colonial and patriarchal seventies, past and present. "A Premonition of the Bombing of Bologna Station: August 1980", cleverly displaced to an Italian suburb of Sydney, hangs immobile in a sun-drenched predicament of dread and displacement.

Hugh Lauder's good ideas don't always lead to good poems. They are too often elusive or over-supervised. I don't want to feel the lump in the throat that he seems to prescribe in response to "The Airman's Death", to his plucky grandfather, or to the woman who irons the suit her husband will don to court a lover. Elizabeth Smither's *Professor Musgrove's Canary* divides into three discrete sections: the title section of short poems arising from her year as Literary Fellow at Auckland University; a series of elegies for her father; and a response to Hugh Lauder's challenge "to write a poem of 600 lines and present it to him at Auckland International Airport on the day of [his] departure" for London.

The names of Europe's best – such as Beethoven, Utrillo, Wittgenstein – crowd the surface

of these mannered, too-clever poems. Her exhibitionism is relentless, her daring coquettish. But in one very winning poem, "The O in Shakespeare Explained", her obliquities delight:

Sometimes a writer turns
His eye to the whole of his subject
Or a whole subject apart from it
O is the word for it.

This book against a stream, a flood
A sky of stars that process
Any digression as long as it is large
O is the word for it.

A hundred thousand blades of field
And it held whole in all detail
A wheel of birds that sagas make
O is the word for it.

And Shakespeare's head beginning to ache
For sure the play is a sandwich
And slippery as eel or heart
O is the word for it.

In the beat of the elegies for her father she drops her fortifications and writes with "the heart and soul . . . bared".

Lauris Edmund's *Seasons and Creatures*, published in England by Bloodaxe, is a selection of short poems about family, memory and aging. The memories take the form of condensed narratives spiced with images as fine as these: "the sky as clean as a cut apple", "the moon poised with a bright patience".

But as complete poems they disappoint. Time after time, they are undermined by a sententious, hectoring final remark. A muted poem about loss and memory ends with a trite intrusion: "This is the chemistry of pain". A quiet, late-night walk ends predictably with a reflection on the sleeping young and "Their dream of a lifetime to come". The thistledown delicacy of "Exodus" is wrecked by a final stanza of exegesis. Her compositional template does little for the music of the poems, though there are moments of beautifully modulated promise: "Up here / at the window the maple trees' shadow / fingers the indigo dusk", and "Tompo", a long "Twelve Days of Christmas"-type inventory of the nine months of pregnancy, is a success from start to finish: in its excited haste it forgets to add a sonorous afterword:

at five months it's an almost-caught
flover flapping back
to the glorious water

six, it's a song
with a chorus of basses, seven, five grapefruit
in a mesh bag that bounces on the hip . . .

Beyond the second-hand

Tom Aitken

C. J. KOCH
Crossing the Gap: A novelist's essays
167pp. Chatto and Windus. £11.95.
0701132167

These nine essays by the award-winning Australian novelist C. J. Koch provide a useful introduction to the continuing debate on the situation of the Australian writer, and to Koch's own fiction. The "Gap" of the title should be plural. The fissures of history and experience – between, for example, English past and Australian present, puritanical Tasmania and sophisticated mainland Australia – have shaped Koch's mind and imagination. He writes compulsively of people – "doubtless" who embody such dualities. Also central is the notion of the "second-hand". An indulgently literary life, conducted behind protective walls of paper, is second-hand. It may lure us towards a destructive fairyland: the semi-literate of Harman Hesse, childishly exploring his own ego, may become the blood-stained disciple of Charles Manson.

Colonial societies are similarly second-hand. Emergent, they have more in common with each other than with their former masters. "The Asian-Pacific region . . . is our territory, and our writers may well do a lot to define it; even perhaps to give it configurations it didn't have before." "Geography", Koch tells us, "is the great hidden shaper of history and character", and he is extraordinarily good at evoking

place. 1950s London, "waited for as an adolescent waits for love", exhibits patterns of deference fantastic to Koch then and us now. Hippie California throws him into conflict with an "artist as divine madman" (or denizen of fairyland) who portrays a paedophilic murder as "understandable and natural". India reveals dualist systems of mythology and metaphor which illuminate his own.

In Australia, geography has produced "a spirit weirdly at odds with the original British one", and it is no longer a "second-hand" British province, but a foreign country, with nuances and family jokes in its writing that only the native can fully understand. Its writers, none the less, must avoid that

glibness which tries to throw out the European inheritance . . . and which also treats with foolish complacency the diverse and rich Asian cultures we seek to make connection with. The one cannot lightly be discarded; the other cannot instantly be put on. They have, too, duties which reach beyond immediate and regional concerns. They must affirm "the central worth of human beings", and "encounter those voices that are heard in silence. Without them we may lose a part of ourselves."

Koch the essayist, it will be seen, is an earnest seeker after truth who sometimes labours a point and who reaches generally unsurprising conclusions, but his novels are more lively explorations of the most interesting themes of the essays. The eponymous narrator of *The Doubtman* (1985) is riven by his religious and racial inheritance, and his associates travel the dangerous road to fairyland, in *Across the Sea*

Wall (revised edition published in 1981), the hero sets out to travel by sea to England but is diverted to India by an unsatisfactory love affair. His life is thrown into confusion but also unexpectedly enriched. In both books Koch is happier when evoking place and atmosphere than when constructing a plot which exactly fits his theme, but in *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978) his vision and technique are fully integrated. This powerful novel examines a collection of doubtemen working as reporters in Indonesia during the last months of Sukarno's rule and displays, as Anthony Burgess has remarked, "an exactly caught phase of history symbolic of a larger reality". Koch lacks the epic breadth and vivid detail of his compatriot Patrick White, but he is no honest traditional novelist bent on fulfilling his proclaimed purpose of giving to the life of his region configurations which it has not had before. His essays offer lucid, intermittently striking expositions of the emotions and ideas which have fuelled his fiction.

Coast to Coast, an anthology of recent Australian prose writing edited by Kerry Goldsworthy (1984), Angus and Robertson. £4.95. 0207 153000, is a revival of the aural series of the same name, which was first published in 1941. The present selection includes extracts from autobiographical writing by David Malouf, Vincent Buckley and Bernard Smith, and from Elizabeth Jolley's novel *Foxglove*, as well as short stories and journalism by, among others, Roseleen Lova, Frank Moorhouse, Tim Winton, Olga Masters, Barbara Hanrahan, and Helen Garner.

What men or gods, what maidens loth

Hugh Lloyd-Jones

Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologicum Classice
Volume Three: Atherium-Eros.
Part One, 1,080pp; Part Two, Index 84pp and
Plates 741pp.
Zürich: Artemis.
3 76088751

In reviewing the first two double volumes of this splendid work (*TLS*, December 28, 1984), I wrote that it would be priceless to scholars for at least a century. I will not now repeat the detailed description of the aims and methods of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologicum Classice* given in that review, but will say again that it is of the greatest value to students of ancient literature, history and religion, just as much as to students of ancient and Renaissance art, and that the standard of the contributions is in keeping with the magnificent production of the books.

Since Demeter is held over for a later volume, the principal deities dealt with in Volume Three are Dionysos (Bacchus) and Eros (Amor, Cupido). Dionysos gets 152 pages of text and 160 pages of plates. Carlo Gasparri deals with Dionysos in art, Alina Veneri with the literary sources; the latter provides a useful article, but fails to mention the important work of E. R. Dodds and Albert Henrichs, as also E. E. Rice's book *The Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus* (reviewed in the *TLS*, May 11, 1984). "Dionysos' divine identity", Henrichs has written, "oscillates bewilderingly between extreme and even opposite characteristics, and to trace his evolution in terms of religious history, or to understand him holistically as an existential archetype, is not easy": this is abundantly confirmed by the series of illustrations given here. Henrichs has criticized Martin Robertson for seeing, in his *History of Greek Art* (1976), the sequence of the three main types of Dionysos, the bearded, the youthful, the effeminate, as a purely artistic development due to a general trend in Greek art, pointing out that the different portrayals of the god in literature do not coincide with this chronological succession. But it is wrong to say that Homer's story of the persecution of Dionysos by Lykourgos already implies an effeminate god, for Dionysos here is not effeminate, but is still a child; the effeminate Dionysos first occurs in literature in Aeschylus; and after the uniconic or theriomorphic presentations of the earliest times, the

lists given here do indeed indicate the prevalence of the three types in question more or less in serial order.

Until well into the fifth century the god is generally a dignified and bearded figure; though he is often surrounded by satyrs and menads in an advanced state of Dionysiac excitement, the god himself is notably calm and restrained. The first juvenile Dionysos in Attic art is on the gigantismachy of the Altamura Painter, and the type becomes common only during the last quarter of the fifth century. During the fourth century, effeminacy gradually creeps into the likenesses of the god; it is seen already in the "Sardanapalos" Dionysos attributed to the circle of Praxiteles. Though temples of Dionysos are not common in Magna Graecia and Sicily, he was closely associated with the cults of other deities there, and no subject is commoner in the art of this region, so that editors of Sophocles who emend away the statement (*Autigone* 1118) that Dionysos frequents Italy, seem not to be acquainted with the vases or the sculpture of that region. During the Hellenistic period Dionysos appears as a patron of culture and civilization, with whom monarchs liked to identify themselves; but by then he has lost much of his archaic gravity and depth.

Eros gets 199 pages of text and 118 pages of plates; Antoinette Jerny is primarily responsible. Like that of Dionysos, Eros' development shows a gradual move away from the time when Greek art struck its beholders with profound emotions, notably with awe and terror. His earliest likenesses, too, were aniconic: in his famous temple at Thespiae in Boeotia, the ancient statue of "rough stone" continued to be the cult image, even after the courtly Pityrre, a native of that place, had presented the celebrated statue of Eros by Praxiteles. From the end of the archaic period, Eros is regularly winged; during the sixth century his likenesses, previously rare, become commoner, particularly in Laconia, but they are unusual in Attic art before about 520-510, when their new prominence may be associated with the presence at Athens of the poet Anacreon. At first Eros has most often homosexual associations, but during the fifth century he becomes increasingly heterosexual. But at this time he is still a handsome and often virile young man, for the origins of the putto type lie in the Hellenistic period.

The next most prominent deities in Volume Three are the Dioskouroi (Castor and Pollux), who get 68 pages of text and 47 pages of plates; but the volume also includes such divine or

semi-divine personages as Ariadne (conveniently held over, so that she is in the same volume as her consort, Dionysos), Atlas, Attis, Baubo, Bendis, the grotesque Egyptian god Bes, Bona Dea, the cat-goddess Bubastis, the Charites (Gratiae), Charon (well handled by Christiane Saurvinou-Inwood), the Chimaira, Daphne, Dike, Diktyonna, Dione, Dis Pater, Echo, Echidna, Eileithya, Eirene, Enkelados, Epialtes, Erinyes, Eris, Heroes in this volume include Amphiaros (and also his charioteer Baton), Atreus, Automedon, Branchos, Daidalos, Deiphobos, Delphos (the eponym of Delphi, often, but it seems mistakenly, held to have been black), Diomedes, Dolon, Echion (the first man out of the Wooden Horse, and killed at once), Elpenor, Endymion, Epaios, Epopeus, Erginos. If you know anyone who thinks he knows the myths well, ask him to distinguish Echelos, Echemos and Echelaos. Heroines include Briseis, Chryseis, Danae, the Danaids, Deidamia, Delanaira, Dirke, Elektra, Eribolia, Erigone. Again there are many personified abstractions, such as Autopsia, Bia, Demokratia (on the tomb of Kritias), Ekecheirion (=True), Ekklisia, Elpis, Epikosthes (=Adornment), Epiktisis (=Acquisition). There are eponyms of places, such as Attika, Britannia (not as we know her), Constantinopolis, Ephesos. Satyr-names include the trio Dophios, Terpekelos and Peolias, shown pursuing the solitary pleasures in which their names indicate an interest.

The article on the Tegean priestess Auge, seduced by Herakles when drunk and by him the mother of the great hero Telephos, offers an excellent illustration of the value of the *Lexicon*. It was written too early to take account of the cup in the Thracian treasure, lately exhibited in the British Museum, that shows Auge with Herakles (see A. Fol, B. Nikolov and R. F. Hodinot, *The New Thracian Treasure from Rogozen, Bulgaria*, No 4 (opposite p 32)); but it contains depictions of her story which would show clearly what the subject was, even if the cup had not been inscribed with Auge's name.

On the whole Volume Three contains fewer failures to notice new literary evidence than the earlier volumes; but there is one at Part One, p 126, where a papyrus has shown that Apollonios of Rhodes (*Argonautica* 1,219 f) described the sons of Boreas as having wings not only on their heels, but on their temples. The story that Minos pursued the fleeing Daidalos to the west and died at Kamikos in Sicily requires a new interest in view of the discovery of Mycenaean remains in that island,

Rural roots

Lin Foxhall

ROBIN OSBORNE
Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek city and its countryside
216pp. George Philip. £16.95.
054001118

Classical Landscape with Figures says something genuinely new about the ancient Greek city-state (*polis*) by examining it in the setting of its rural territory. Robin Osborne begins with the paradox that the Greeks' "self-representation commonly plays down the basic reliance upon the countryside". Though the real economy was central to the livelihood of the Greek city, and the subsistence of individual Greeks depended upon their personal involvement in it, the literary, iconographic and epigraphical sources concentrate on the town and urban life.

Osborne then attempts to define the "real" countryside, in chapters on ancient farming where he stresses the difficulties of pasturing agriculture in the harsh Greek landscape, its un dependable environment; on the ways of settlement patterns of city-states at various periods and on the often disruptive effect of mining and quarrying. He goes on to examine exchange relationships both within and between cities, with the related problems of sufficiency, food-supply and markets and the diversity of political relationships that exist between town centre and hinterland. The basic premise of his chapter on war and the countryside, with which not all scholars will agree, is that changes in the nature of warfare between the sixth and third centuries meant that farmers were no longer central to military organization and transformed the relationship between town and country. Osborne then turns to the rural foundations of Greek religion, pointing out the close links between the Greeks perceived between the well-being of the countryside and that of the human community. The book concludes by attempting to distil the essence of the *polis*, despite the variety of forms it took.

Classical Landscape with Figures is well and elegantly written, with informative and good, unusual photographs, most taken by the author. It will prove a useful reading for anyone interested in ancient Greece, and essential for anyone studying Greek city-state. Osborne presents a great deal of material about the *polis* that is not available elsewhere, especially that gained from archaeological surveys of the past decade. Few ancient historians are so competent at integrating archaeological and documentary evidence. He falters only on the question of who left behind the debris scattered about the countryside. Although careful to say that we know most about the rich, he sometimes switches without warning from discussing peasants to discussing rich landowners. The unwary reader might think that the book shows up clearly in the archaeological record, whereas it could be argued that the archaeological traces of classical antiquity are more discernible traces.

Osborne could also have made better use of comparative material and anthropological theory. Though the town-country dichotomy is carefully brought out, there is no sense of a dynamic, integrated system. *Polis* as a dynamic, integrated system, as in the case of the Cistercians, however, the ancient Greeks, as in his discussion of consumers and the status value of Athenian pottery. It has been convincingly argued that the upper classes drank from metal cups, not, as Osborne implies, ones, nor can a full understanding of the mythological scenes on the vases be essential for their enjoyment and value. To return to the book's initial theme, the Greeks might be characterized, in the words of Julian Pitt-Rivers (writing of Andalusia), as "a people who dwell in the world which they go out to cultivate, but who do not love it". Perhaps the *polis* lies more then in its values system than in its structure?

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An age in the making

Phillip Lindley

STEPHEN MURRAY
Building Troyes Cathedral: The late Gothic campaigns
257pp. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. \$47.
025331279

The cathedral of Troyes, like Beauvais or Tours, belongs to that category of great French churches whose construction dragged on for centuries. Indeed, Troyes Cathedral could be said to be still unfinished, since the southern tower of the west front, the Tour St Paul, was never built. The present cathedral is the result of no fewer than seven different medieval building campaigns. The first three, in the thirteenth century, concentrated on the choir and transepts, and are the subject of N. Bongartz's monograph, *Die frühen Bauteile der Kathedrale in Troyes* (1979). Stephen Murray's *Building Troyes Cathedral* was originally intended to form a companion volume, and analyses the last four campaigns, which were responsible for the completion of the transepts, the crossing tower, nave and west facade. Although there is little documentary evidence for the thirteenth-century architecture, fabric accounts and records of chapter deliberations survive for the later work in almost embarrassingly large numbers. Perhaps Murray's most important achievement is his correlation of the topographical indications and the names of individual artisans mentioned in these accounts with specific parts of the cathedral. He formulates, in an exemplary demonstration of architectural-historical method, a highly detailed chronology of the fabric in which he can frequently assign particular capitals to named individuals. He is therefore able to comment on the stylistic personalities of many of the master-masons: he characterizes Jacques le Vochier (active between 1450 and 1455), for example, as a highly conservative mason unable to respond to the challenges posed by the west facade, while Martin Chambiges, who came to Troyes after 1502, is shown to have been an inventive designer and an expert on structural matters.

Houses in order

John Harvey

ROGER STALLEY
The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland: An account of the history, art, and architecture of the white monks in Ireland from 1142 to 1540
239pp. Yale University Press. £25.
030037376

There has recently been a renewed interest in Western monasticism and in Romanesque and Gothic art. At times there is, as in the last century, an over-emphasis on the role of the monks and an insistence upon the particular "style" of the Orders. In *The Cistercian Monasteries of Ireland* Roger Stalley rightly states that it is "better to think in terms of a 'Cistercian attitude' rather than a specific style of architecture", and points out that the monks built in the varying regional styles of Europe. In the case of the Cistercians, however, the adoption of all houses to the General Chapter for a time to some degree of uniformity, and the export from Cîteaux of elements of a new sort of architecture which had been developed in the Burgundian homeland of Cîteaux. This style was certainly not French, for it was a separate kingdom within France, and even the Duchy did not pay the French king until about 1180. This monographic treatment of the Order in Ireland is of unusual importance because the monks there were almost alone as monks, but who do not love it". Perhaps the *polis* lies more then in its values system than in its structure?

nomenon, following the Anglo-Norman conquest of 1169-70. The extent to which the two groups remained different, building "in two separate styles" in spite of topographical interpenetration, provides an interesting commentary on the dominance of political factors.

The book is not limited to architecture, but covers sculpture, decoration and furnishings, as well as a sufficiency of general history. Because of this wide scope Dr Stalley is able to come to some important general conclusions, notably that it was the advent of the Cistercians that put an end to the traditional arts of Ireland. Complex animal patterns and the richness of detail associated with Irish manuscripts withered under the stern simplicity preached by St Bernard. It was only much later, towards the end of the Middle Ages, that a typically Irish style, rich in detail, broke the strait-jacket and imposed a national stamp on the buildings. From the thirteenth century the architecture was due to professional masons and it is evident that the mother-daughter relationship of houses had little or no influence upon plans. One curious fact is that much of the structural evidence suggests the use of the English foot (rather than the Roman, Burgundian, or French) as a unit of measurement. Even before the conquest of 1170, English cultural influence in the guise of skilled masons may have accompanied the early monks on their way to Ireland, and before that Stalley is able to point to the English West Country as the source of characteristics found in Cornish Chapel (1127-34) at Cashel as well as in Cistercian houses such as Mellifont and Boyle. In sharp contrast, later Gothic in Ireland showed a marked antipathy to English Perpendicular.

There is an excellent bibliography, and the apparatus includes an informative gazetteer of all the major houses, and a large corpus of moulding profiles to scale. The illustrations are well reproduced, the design handsome, and the price reasonable.

Detailed discussions of the four main building campaigns form the backbone of the book. Murray highlights a variety of reasons why construction took so long: political factors ranging from the absorption of Champagne into the kingdom of France to the accusations of sorcery against Bishop Guichard, who was suspected of baptizing and burning a wax effigy of the queen (his contemporary, Bishop Langton of Lichfield, suffered from similarly bizarre accusations); economic causes such as the disruptions of the Hundred Years War; inadequate funding and planning; design uncertainties and changes of priority; and, most important of all, a series of disastrous structural failures. In 1228 a whirlwind badly damaged the incomplete choir, the crossing tower collapsed in 1365 and the upper nave and north transept rose-window followed in 1389. The first failure could hardly have been avoided, but the later collapses were due to foolish planning decisions, poor maintenance, inadequate funding and incompetent workmen. Design mistakes, such as Master Jehan de Turvoile's mispositioning of the nave's upper flying buttresses, exacerbated the difficulties. Fundamental problems were actually inherent in the stylistic conservatism of the nave design, for by copying features from the Rayonnant choir and transepts structural weaknesses were also inherited. Murray's analysis helps to dispel the myth that the thirteenth century saw the supreme realization of Gothic. In structural terms, the later Gothic builders were following a very poor model.

Murray adduces documentary as well as stylistic evidence for the study of Rayonnant prototypes in the mid-fifteenth century: when Master Bleuet, master-mason of Reims Cathedral, was asked to design the west front of Troyes, he took a party including two of the canons to see the thirteenth-century façades of Reims, Amiens and Notre-Dame de Paris, before drawing out his own design. Other issues of broad interest in late medieval architecture are illuminated in the book. The resentment by local masons of outside specialists, which seems to have been common in the late Middle Ages (and which erupted into violence at York in 1408), is hinted at in the rival plans for the

choir-screen and west front. Sometimes basic decisions were taken only after work had already begun: construction of the crossing tower, for example, started in 1412-13 but it was not until 1414-15 that it was decided how many tiers at windows it should feature. Murray's convincing demonstration that the nave vaults were centred on mounds of earth will undoubtedly be of interest to those studying constructional techniques, as will be his discussion of the practice from 1452-3, when false templates were taken to the quarry in order to speed up work through mass production and to cut transport costs. On these issues, as elsewhere in his work, a familiarity with the extensive literature on contemporary English architecture (such as Rackham's analysis of the nave of Westminster Abbey in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* for 1909-10) would have provided Murray with valuable comparative material: although his book concentrates on Troyes Cathedral his work has much wider implications.



Tympanum and relief of Chartres Cathedral; reproduced here from *The Sculptors of the West Portals of Chartres Cathedral* by Whitney S. Stoddard (252pp. Norton. £45. 0393 02365 6).

Problems on site

Simon Pepper

JOHN FITCHEN
Building Construction Before Mechanization
320pp. MIT Press. \$19.95.
0262061023

Despite the modest success of new journals such as *Vernacular Architecture* and *Construction History*, the day-to-day processes of building construction are still largely unknown outside tiny specialist circles. Architects and engineers - still less those with a broader cultural interest in old buildings and their conservation - rarely stop to consider how heavy loads were raised, materials hauled, foundations made, and massive structures ventilated before mechanical power came to the building site, or how Roman concrete was cured before its chemistry was understood. It is this field that John Fitchen sets out to chart in *Building Construction Before Mechanization*.

It is an ambitious undertaking, for even the post-medieval working building left few written records, and the operational details of building have to be pieced together by raiding the secondary materials of half-a-dozen academic disciplines, by observing contemporary third-world techniques, and by the exercise of what might be termed "technically informed imagination".

Fitchen adopts a thematic approach with chapters on the role of the builder, *jury-building*, the sequence of construction, stresses, wood, transportation and ventilation; followed by a coda on the building of Cheops' Pyramid. Arches, vaults and domes have long enjoyed a special place in the history of both structures

and architecture, but for Fitchen it is the means - not the ends - that are focused on. What raised and held up the masonry until it could support itself was temporary wooden shoring, centring, shuttering, scaffolding, lifting gear and even ladders, all of which consumed enormous quantities of timber and posed problems of its own in terms of erection, dismantling and stability (as is well known to the accident inspectorate today). Indeed, much buildierly ingenuity has been expended on the elimination of the so-called "falsework" by such devices as the stone-weighted rope (designed to keep vaulting stones in place until the structure was complete), or the spiralling blockwork courses used in Spanish domes and Eskimo igloos.

Building Construction Before Mechanization is a mine of information. Inevitably, it is general in scope; and made to appear more so by Fitchen's stylistic preference for sweeping generalities in the text, leaving the more curious reader to burrow in the extensive notes for particulars and examples. It is irritating to have to use the end-notes to identify the authors of the extensive quotations which, after translation, read much the same whether ancient or modern. Specialists, of course, will find little that is new. Pyramids, barrel vaults, the movement of obelisks, and the buttressed vaulting of Gothic cathedrals feature prominently; and the unwary non-specialist could be forgiven for supposing that crucks and hammer-beams were the dominant structural elements in medieval English building. Yet there are many insights, a jargon-free use of language, and an ability to conceive and explain the construction process as a total system which will make the book accessible - and I suspect, thought-provoking - to a wide readership.

TLS Listings

A comprehensive weekly selection
of new and forthcoming books received by the TLS

Anthropology

Erington, Frederick, and Deborah Gewertz Cultural Alternatives and a Feminist Anthropology: An analysis of culturally constructed gender interests in Papua New Guinea. *Cambridge UP*, 185pp. £20/\$24.95. 0 521 3402 6. 2/7/87.
Fortes, M., and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, editors African Political Systems (1st pub 1940). *Routledge*, 302pp. £9.95 (paperback). 0 7103 0243 2. 2/7/87.
Lamphere, Louise From Working Daughters to Working Mothers: Immigrant women in a New England industrial community (Anthropology of Contemporary Issues). *Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP*, 300pp. \$49.50 (hardcover). \$16.45 (paperback). 0 8014 1943 X (hcl). 0 8014 9441 9 (pb). 2/7/87.

Archaeology

Merrifield, Ralph The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic. *Batford*, 224pp. illus. £14.95. 0 7134 4870 9. 3/7/87.

Architecture

Blickling Hall. *National Trust*, 90pp. illus. £1.95 (paperback). 0 7078 0866 2.

Ralph, Edward The Modern Urban Landscape. *Reaktion Books*, 272pp. illus. £10 (hardcover). £10.95 (paperback). 0 7099 2231 0 (hcl). 0 7099 4270 2 (pb). 2/7/87.

Art

Arnos, Victor, et al Graham Ovenden Academic Editions / New York: St Martin's, 160pp. plates. £24.95. 0 85670 916 6. 0 112 0119 3. 7/87.

Cohen, Jann Lebold The New Chinese Painting 1949-1986. *New York: Abrams*, 160pp. illus. \$35 (hardcover). \$19.95 (paperback). 0 8109 1372 0 (hcl). 0 8109 2355 6 (pb). 6/87.

Homblich, E. H., edited by Richard Woodfield Reflections on the History of Art: Views and reviews. *Oxford: Phaidon*, 250pp. illus. £17.50. 0 7143 2491 4. 7/7/87.

Johnson, Douglas, and Madeline Johnson The Age of Illusion: Art and politics in France 1918-1940. *Thames and Hudson*, 160pp. illus. £14.50. 0 500 01404 3. 2/7/87.

McKenzie, Joseph Puges of Experience: Photography 1947-1987. *Edinburgh: Polygon*, 190pp. illus. £19.95 (hardcover). £12.95 (paperback). 0 948275 42 1 (hcl). 0 948275 43 X (pb). 10/7/87.

Pain, Michael, editor Happy Holidays: The golden age of railway posters. *Michael Joseph / Pavilion*, 90pp. plates. £9.95. 1 85145 192 7. 2/7/87.
Turner, Jane Shoaf, editor Master Drawings: The Woodcut Collection. *Royal Academy of Arts / Wittenberg and Nicolson*, 304pp. illus. £15.90 (paperback).

Bibliography

Humm, Maggie An Annotated Critical Bibliography of Feminist Criticism. *Brighton: Harvester*, 240pp. £45. 0 7108 1061 X. 1/7/87.
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